

A photograph of a man and a woman standing on a large, weathered log in a dense forest. The woman is on the left, wearing a light-colored dress, and the man is on the right, wearing a blue shirt and shorts, with a red headband. They are both looking towards the right. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage, with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

# etc.

MAGAZINE

**SHADES OF GREEN** A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE AT CITY  
DIEGO RIVERA'S BLACKLISTED MURAL • FOULED BY THE NCAA • STILL PUNK AT 71

CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO • FALL 2008





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| <b>JOUR 19 Contemporary News Media</b>           |                  |         |          |  |
| MWF  | 9:00 - 10:00 am  | Ocean   | Gonzales |  |
| T  | 6:30 - 9:30 pm   | Mission | Graham   |  |
| <b>JOUR 21 News Writing and Reporting</b>        |                  |         |          |  |
| MWF  | 10:00 - 11:00 am | Ocean   | Gonzales |  |
| W  | 6:30 - 9:30 pm   | LGBT    | Rochmis  |  |
| <b>JOUR 22 Feature Writing</b>                   |                  |         |          |  |
| TR   | 11:00 - 12:30 pm | Ocean   | Graham   |  |
| R  | 6:30 - 9:30 pm   | Mission | Rochmis  |  |
| <b>JOUR 23 Electronic Copy Editing</b>           |                  |         |          |  |
| T  | 6:30 - 9:30 pm   | LGBT    | Rochmis  |  |
| <b>JOUR 24 Newspaper Laboratory</b>              |                  |         |          |  |
| MWF  | 12:00 - 1:00 pm  | Ocean   | Gonzales |  |
| + Lab hours by arrangement                       |                  |         |          |  |
| <b>JOUR 29 Magazine Editing &amp; Production</b> |                  |         |          |  |
| M  | 6:30 - 8:30 pm   | Mission | Graham   |  |
| + Lab hours by arrangement                       |                  |         |          |  |
| <b>JOUR 31 Internship Experience</b>             |                  |         |          |  |
| Lab hours by arrangement                         |                  | Ocean   | Gonzales |  |
| <b>JOUR 37 Intro to Photojournalism</b>          |                  |         |          |  |
| TR   | 9:30 - 11:00 am  | Mission | Lifland  |  |
| W  | 7:00 - 10:00 pm  | Ocean   | Lifland  |  |

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PHOTOGRAPH Al Lin

COVER Ildiko Polony (*left*) and Kaya Mac Millen, presidents of City College's two student-run environmental groups, at South Lake in Golden Gate Park (see "The road to green City", page 29) PHOTOGRAPH Al Lin



# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Jonestown's Message

### Editor:

Wish to commend you for producing a fine magazine. Having been one of the subjects of Dave de Give's article recounting the Jonestown tragedy ("The Last 'White Night,'" Spring 2008), I can attest to its general accuracy as well as its thought-provoking nature. A small correction: my daughter's name is Liane Harris, and it's in her memory and honor I do the work that I do. [Editor's Note: Our story referred to Liane as Liane Harris Amos, using both her father's and mother's last names.]

The Peoples Temple story is one I believe needs to be told over and over, and in as many ways and from as many points of view as possible. Young people, I believe, are particularly served by learning of the consequences surrounding the choices and associations they may make. There is an old Russian proverb that comes to mind here: "Not everybody with a long knife is a cook." Any organization that operates on the premise that the ends justify the means must be exposed. Peoples Temple and Jim Jones went to extravagant lengths to isolate its members both physically and emotionally, pressing them to shun their relatives not in the organization. This behavior I've found to be common in other cults.

Merely having a charismatic leader is not, in my view, sufficient to identify an organization as a cult. The test is whether or not, in its words and practices, it fully empowers the individual members to their full potential as human beings and does so from the get-go with honesty.

Rest assured that the folks involved were, for the greatest part, ordinary, intelligent, talented, socially conscious, dependable, hardworking and educated. Many had earned advanced degrees. In other words, folks just like you. If you believe otherwise, or that these people were somehow extra needy or deficient in some way, you missed the message. Further proof of that, though none be necessary, are the rich, productive lives former members live today.

Once again, thank you, your writer, Dave de Give, and photographer Al Lin for allowing the story to be told and so well.

**Sherwin Harris**  
Alumnus  
Hayward, Calif.



PHOTOGRAPH Al Lin

## FROM THE EDITORS

It's hard to imagine what we will most remember when we look back on fall 2008. The United States elected its first African-American president. The death toll in Iraq topped more than 4,000 American lives. A deep recession took hold. On the national level, the local level, and here at City College, we face choices that will represent a shift in the way we think about our society.

At this college, where the population changes with each new semester, our connection to these issues can feel tenuous, at best. But for many this is both a testing ground for our potential and a very real microcosm of the greater society around us.

In 1940, Diego Rivera completed a mural for the college that we now call "Pan American Unity." It's a collage of culture, politics, art and science. And his concept stands. This college is as global as its inhabitants. International students stretch the borders of our understanding. Diamond Dave Whitaker brings us bi-coastal hippie history. John Muir Laws teaches us environmental stewardship. Athletes like Roburt Sallie and entrepreneurs like Jason Lewis launch careers here. Everyone participates.

The population of this college shapes the institution itself, and its influence travels as far as the students who pass through.

Several stories in this issue explore recent greening efforts at City College, the role of students and faculty, and the impact on surrounding communities. The stories follow the triumphs and shortcomings of a movement that's building momentum around the world.

When we move on, we will carry this experience into an uncertain future. But we shouldn't forget, we also have a responsibility to be conscious of our actions here, now.

— The editors

## **THE GREEN LINE**

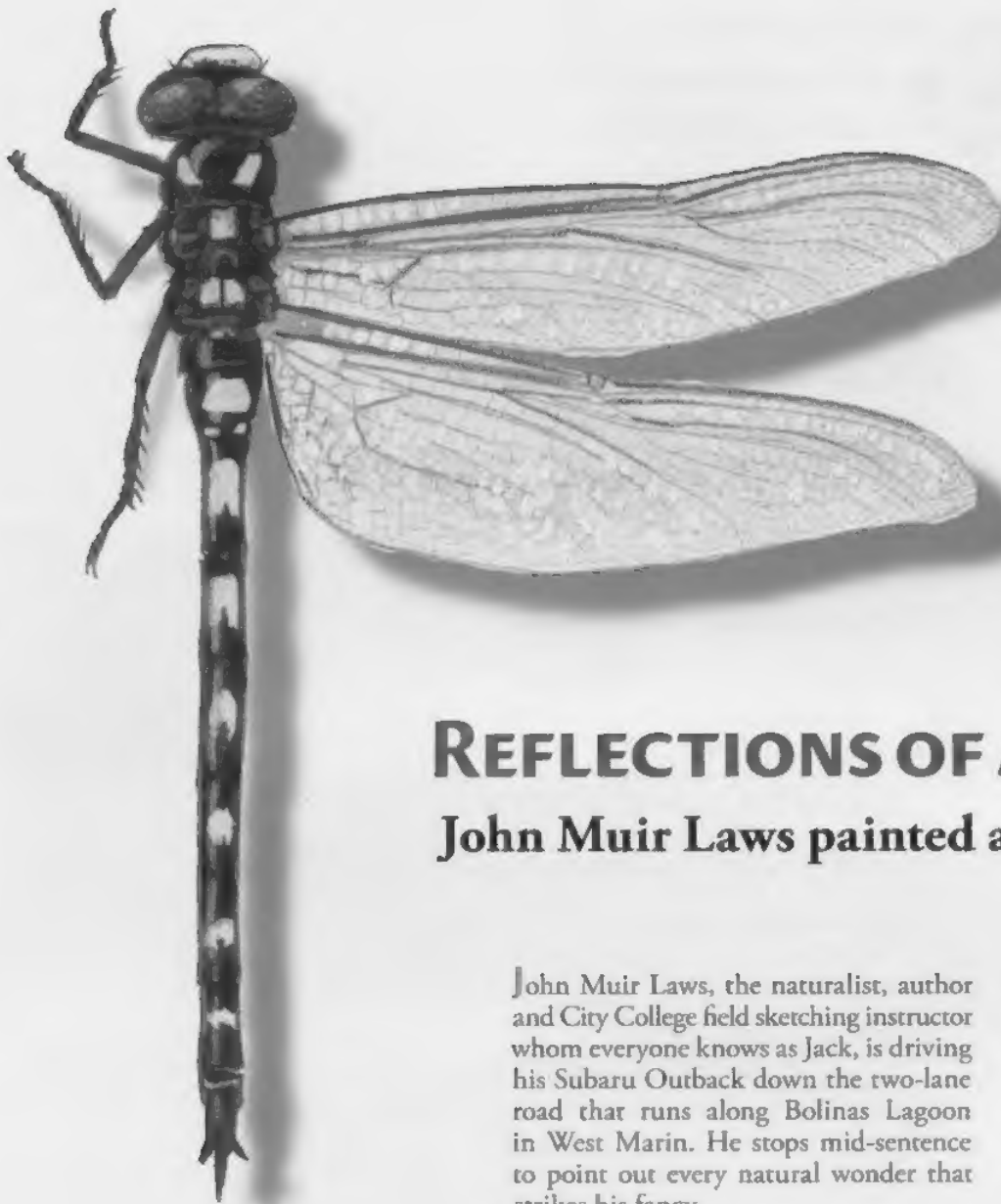
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**Pacific Spiketail**  
*Cordulegaster dorsalis*

THE ILLUSTRATIONS FOR THIS STORY WERE PROVIDED BY JOHN MUIR LAWS FROM HIS FIELD GUIDE TO THE SIERRA NEVADA. LAWS WILL BE TEACHING BIOLOGY 29 (SCIENTIFIC ILLUSTRATION) ON SATURDAYS IN FEBRUARY AT CITY COLLEGE.

## REFLECTIONS OF A NATURALIST

John Muir Laws painted a window to the Sierra

by Melissa Bosworth

John Muir Laws, the naturalist, author and City College field sketching instructor whom everyone knows as Jack, is driving his Subaru Outback down the two-lane road that runs along Bolinas Lagoon in West Marin. He stops mid-sentence to point out every natural wonder that strikes his fancy.

"Hey you, big pelicans!" he says to a pair of birds flying low over the water's surface. "Wonderful bird. Look at those wings. Flip, flap, flip, flap."

First it was the fog rolling in over Mount Tamalpais – "What a beautiful cloud. It's stunning." Then a California quail on the shoulder of the winding mountain road, a kingfisher perched on a telephone wire, and now the pelicans. His mind has been wandering in every direction but to the road ahead.

"It's a very dangerous thing to go driving with a birder," he warns his passenger.

For someone who has this much trouble staying focused, Laws has accomplished an extraordinary feat of patience. "The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada," which

he published through Heyday Books in 2007, comprises 2,710 illustrations of 1,700 species, every drawing an original outlined in light blue graphite and painted in lush watercolor.

It took him six years to complete.

To those who know Laws, he's the best animal impersonator in the state. The 42-year-old author can whistle like a gold-crested sparrow, strut like an egret, and verbalize the inner monologue of a tiny endangered rabbit called the pika. If he puts his iPod on shuffle, it plays Tom Waits and Zydeco music, as well as an assortment of birdcalls. He's an Eagle Scout and a brown belt in jujitsu, and he's addicted to field guides. "My bookshelves are overflowing," he says. And his behavior is as eccentric as his tastes. When someone says "duck," he ducks.

But when Laws sits down and locks his gaze on some plant or animal, that's the most important thing in the world.

Seven years ago, Laws quit his job at the California Academy of Sciences and

set out to create the field guide he had always dreamed of owning. It would be small enough to fit in a pocket, but dense enough to make a broad survey of the flora and fauna in the Sierra Nevada.

"One reason I made the book was so I could make my backpack lighter," he says. "It's like taking all your notes and putting them together."

This may be an understatement. A year into his work, Laws took a sample of his book to six different publishers. Every one of them accepted.

That's because there was something special about the field guide Laws was putting together. For one, Laws is a purist. He doesn't just take a photograph or a sketch of a stuffed animal and drop it in a field guide. Every drawing requires weary hours of field research and observation to portray an animal that an amateur can identify in the field. Or, as Laws puts it, photographs of animals won't always catch them in their natural posture, and the stuffed birds in museums "just kind of look like a bird-sicle."

And Laws' book was different from any field guide manuscript that had landed in these publishers' slush piles before. It was uniquely visual.

When Roger Tory Peterson published the first modern field guide in 1934, he sought to present organisms for easy identification. This meant highlighting their distinguishing features so that amateurs with little knowledge of phylogenetic order could find what they were looking for.

Peterson's field guide became a reference book that allowed amateurs to pursue their own understanding of what they saw. It sparked an uptick in enthusiasm for bird watching and is often credited with the sweeping increase in broader conservation efforts that took place following its publication.

For Laws, whose mind has never conformed to standard systems, it was only natural to take his book one step further from tradition.

"Most field guides are based in the mind of the author," says David Lukas, a columnist for the Los Angeles Times and fellow naturalist, who helped field test the book. "Other authors have such

a deep attachment to language and to words, and I don't think that Jack trusts language, or words on a page. So he made a book that he would use."

Laws has always had a tenuous relationship with written language. When he was in school, growing up in the Haight, he would stay up late just trying to learn how to spell. His parents tried everything to help him read. He even participated in a study at UC Berkeley back when researchers were only beginning to understand what dyslexia was.

He had a fickle attention span, too. As a teenager at the Urban School of San Francisco, he was notorious for starting pillow fights during class.

"Running around in the field and looking at things there was no problem," he says. "It was just when I sat down and looked at those multiplication tables, my mind said, 'OK, we're done.'"

**'When you really start looking, everything is so delightful. It's a matter of learning how to look.'**

**— JOHN MUIR LAWS**

So when Laws went out to paint the Sierra, he didn't see it phylogenetically. He threw that system out the window and started from scratch. The book he came up with is charming, simple and remarkable.

"It's a brilliant stroke of genius in how it's organized," says Lukas. "Because it's based on what you see ... it just trusts that visual imagery."

The color-coded thumb tabs on the front cover of the book lead to sections like "Spiders, Insects & Other Small Animals," and "Yellow Flowers."

"When you're looking at a bird on a branch," Laws says, "you're not thinking, 'what are the muscles in its voice box doing?'"

When he's sketching, though, this is just the kind of thing Laws thinks about. You don't have to understand the animal to recognize it, but you do if you want to draw it so that someone else will.

"If you draw a pretty picture, that's OK," he said recently to a group of City College students he had taken on a field trip to Carquinez Strait. They were lined up along the rail of a footbridge, drawing some ducks in the creek below. "What you want to do is learn something about mallard-duckness by sketching them."

Laws had already learned a few things while doing his own sketches. "Mallards have a very powerful sex drive, and they will mate with anything that moves," he told the class.

Just about everything Laws pointed out that day got a little more color when he described it. The egret had "gold slippers" and the duck had a "cute little duck cheek." Of the salt marsh flora, the parasitic dodder plant caught his eye. "Here's a little marsh plant over here," he shouted to the class. It looked like a tangled heap of orange fishing line. "Oh! It's in full

bloom," he added. "There's a bouquet of dodder flowers!"

When it was time for the class to do their own sketches, Laws instructed them, "Go around and find yourself a salt marsh plant that you would like to get to know better." A few students chuckled. "Introduce yourself," he added.

He was probably joking, but it's hard to say. The man has a connection with wildlife that sometimes blurs the line between understanding and camaraderie. And he certainly wouldn't mind if others got the bug, too.

"By understanding it, we're going to grow to love it," he says. "If we love it, we're going to work together to protect it."



**Pika**  
*Ochotona princeps*





PHOTOGRAPH Dania Maxwell

John Muir Laws sketches a sparrow at the Carquinez Strait salt marsh during a Saturday class. He spent six consecutive summers in the Sierra Nevada working on thousands of drawings for his field guide.

Laws himself falls in love pretty easily.

"I think of myself as an attention deficit disorder naturalist," he says. "People ask me what my favorite thing is, and it's whatever I'm looking at."

At his tidy studio apartment overlooking the Sunset District, Laws keeps a small bird feeder on the balcony and a vast collection of field guides lining his shelves. Among the guides is a copy of "Nine Horses," a book of poems by Billy Collins. It contains a piece that's dear to his heart.

"I read slowly," he says. "I'm dyslexic, so

it's taking me a moment." He stumbles at first, and as he begins to pronounce the words he seems to read as much from memory as from the page. The poem is a wandering ode to the mundane called "Aimless Love."

This morning as I walked along the lakeshore.

I fell in love with a wren  
and later in the day with a mouse  
the cat had dropped under the dining  
room table. ...

No waiting, no huffiness, or rancor –  
just a twinge every now and then

for the wren who had built her nest  
on a low branch overhanging the water  
and for the dead mouse,  
still dressed in its light brown suit.

But my heart is always propped up  
in a field on its tripod, ready for the  
next arrow.

Laws has an indiscriminate fondness for beauty. He's fascinated by mallard-duckness. He's distracted and enraptured. It's impossible to see just one creature, he says, because every organism is only one component of a larger system. He walks along, following the connection from one thing to the next, learning the story, and letting the interwoven ecosystem lead him to new discoveries.

"When you really start looking, everything is so delightful," he says. "It's a matter of learning how to look, and how to fall in love with poison oak." Or pigeons, or pikas or salamanders. Or even the famously ornery German shepherd-sized weasel, the wolverine.

Until this year, the wolverine, which used to inhabit the Sierra, had not been positively documented there since the 1920s. It was one of only a handful of animals that Laws had hoped to put in his book but never saw.

When he was almost finished with the guide, Laws got a call about a wolverine sighting. He packed a few remote sensor cameras and some vials of foul-smelling weasel musk and headed up to the Sierra to sit for a week and wait.

He never saw the wolverine. The film from his cameras produced only a few pictures of his boot from when he was setting them up.

The caption next to Laws' drawing of the wolverine in his guide reads: "Probably extirpated. If seen, photograph and report the sighting to the California Department of Fish and Game." It's a terse entreaty. Fingers crossed.

Early in the morning on February 28, 2008, a remote sensor camera outside Truckee, Calif., captured an unusual image. Sniffing around the base of a pine tree was an animal the size of a large dog with thick, dark fur. The only discernible marking was a broad white stripe across the back of its legs. It was a wolverine.

"When this picture came out it electrified



the biological community," Laws says. "Every graduate student from miles around was there, picking up all the scat they could find."

The wolverine has been photographed in the Sierra three times since the release of Laws' field guide. The most recent series of photos was captured by a remote camera put up in response to the first sighting. Laws has posted all of these photos on his Web site ([www.johnmuirlaws.com](http://www.johnmuirlaws.com)).

He is also spreading the word about the pika, a tiny, high altitude rabbit that collects grass and flowers. It cures them in the sun to use for its winter shelter.

"It's a delightful animal," Laws says. "You actually see them running around with bouquets of flowers coming out of their mouths." As global warming progresses, the pika is losing its habitat. Temperatures over 80 degrees will kill it, and the melting Dana Glacier (in Yosemite National Park) has relegated the pika to only the highest Sierra altitudes. They're trapped.

"These critters have one other problem," says Laws. "They can't vote. And if these creatures are included in the sphere of what we care about, we can make a change."

In fact, Laws has fallen so in love with the pika that its bird-like call rings out whenever his mom calls his cell phone.

"Hi ma-bear," he says, putting the phone on speaker as he snakes the car down the eastern slope of Mount Tamalpais on his way home from a field trip. He

passes the fork for Stinson Beach and Muir Woods.

"I haven't heard from you in a while," says Beatrice Laws, who lives less than a mile from her son, in the Haight.

Laws is a San Francisco native, and the son of two attorneys. He is not related to THE John Muir. He wasn't named after him, either. His mother, who worked as a lawyer for the Sierra Club, gave him the first name John after her father. His father, Robert Laws, gave him the middle name Muir after his own grandmother.

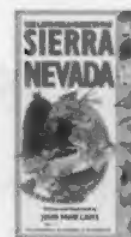
Laws grew up hiking the Sierra with his parents. His father looked up at the birds, he says, and his mother looked down at plants. It was their son's natural proclivity for falling in love that got him looking at everything else.

Laws tries to teach this kind of curiosity to his students. He wants them to see the world through an illustrator's eyes.

"I think that we are programmed not to really look deeply at things," he says. "We quickly assess – 'can that eat me?' and then 'can I eat that?' I think drawing and sketching is an effective way for people to look, and look again."

As a field guide author, Laws hopes that his work will inspire people to pursue their own understanding of nature. Once he's done adapting his book as a text for middle school classes, he wants

The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada



by John Muir Laws  
Heyday Books, 2007  
366 pages  
\$24.95

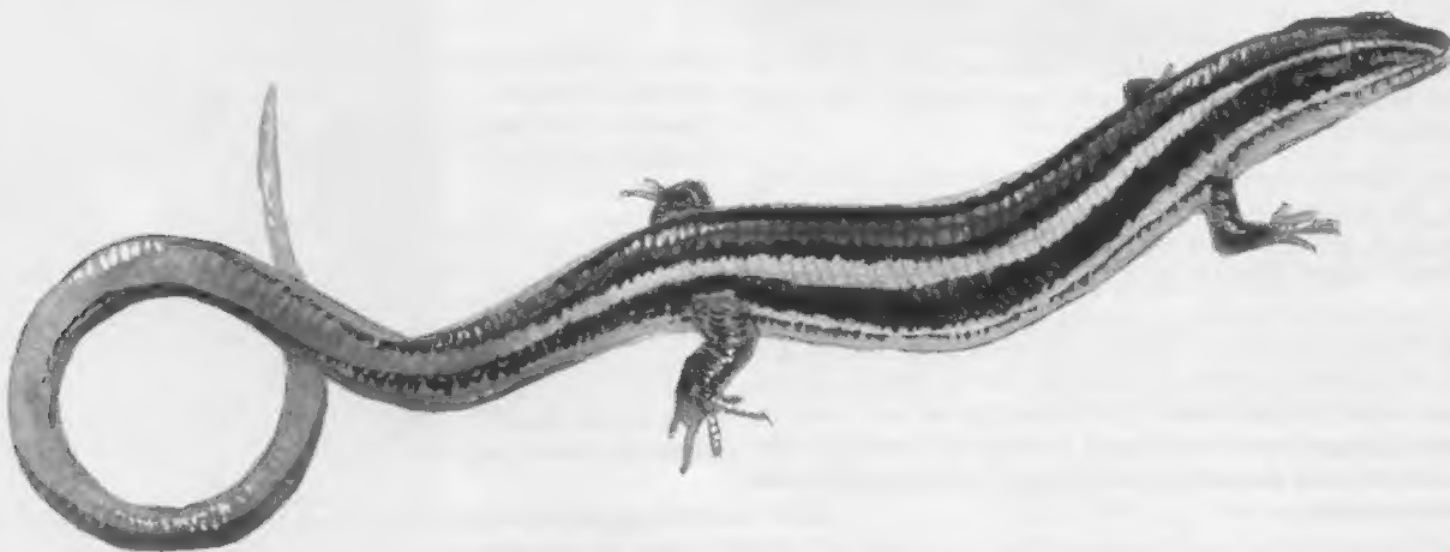
to work on a field guide to the California coast, and another for the deserts.

He is an activist at heart. Illustrating is a means to greater ends – like teaching kids to look more deeply at their surroundings, or making sure that everyone can recognize a wolverine. He considers himself a naturalist first, then an artist.

Laws has been painting since before he can remember, though. He got his love for nature early on from his parents, but it was his grandmother who taught him to use watercolors. She gave him lessons throughout his childhood.

"And Jack, there are no rules," she told him. Maybe that's why he isn't confined by them.

**Melissa Bosworth**  
[mmmbosworth@gmail.com](mailto:mmmbosworth@gmail.com)



**Western Skink**  
*Eumeces gilberti*

# ODYSSEY OF A MURAL

## Politics, war and passion shaped Diego Rivera's 'Pan American Unity'

by Dave de Give Photography Jon Pierre Kelani

When famed Mexican muralist Diego Rivera received an offer to work in San Francisco, the timing could not have been more fortuitous.

His public feud with Mexican officials, whom he accused of supporting fascism, had isolated him politically. His tempestuous marriage to artist Frida Kahlo had ended in divorce. And his friendship with Leon Trotsky – whom Rivera helped to obtain a Mexican visa when the Russian revolutionary fled Europe – had soured due to political differences and Trotsky's affair with Kahlo.

Probably most worrisome, Stalinist assassins in Mexico were plotting to kill Trotsky, and Rivera's own life was also in danger.

So when San Francisco architect Timothy Pflueger sent an envoy to Mexico City to entice Rivera to come paint a mural for City College, the beleaguered artist didn't hesitate.

On April 5, 1940, Pflueger's envoy telegraphed: "R ANXIOUS COMMITMENT SOON ... BELIEVE HE WILL ACCEPT ANY REASONABLE ARRANGEMENT."

This year, City College will help celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Golden Gate International Exhibition, where Rivera painted the famous mural that is now housed in his namesake theater on the Ocean campus. In 1939, the fair had done well enough that the organizers decided to extend it for a second year. Pflueger, one of the fair's organizers, was in charge of an "Art in Action" exhibit planned for the old airplane hangar on Treasure Island.

Pflueger had a reputation for infusing art into his buildings. The Mission District native had designed the Castro Theater in San Francisco and the Paramount Theater in Oakland. And in 1930, he had hired Rivera to create a mural at the Pacific Stock Exchange on Sansome Street.

Now, Pflueger wanted Rivera to collaborate on his latest project. The airplane hangar would be converted into a Palace of Fine Arts, where patrons could watch artists as they worked. Pflueger wanted Rivera to be the main attraction.

The two men hammered out the details by letter and telegram and Pflueger traveled to Mexico City to seal the deal in person. Rivera would create a mural at the fair on Treasure Island, which when completed would be transported to San Francisco Junior College (now City College). It would be installed in the reading room of the new library Pflueger had designed for the Ocean campus.

It was in those early letters between Rivera and Pflueger that the mural's theme began to surface. On April 15, 1940, Rivera wrote, "For years I have felt that the real art of the Americas

most came as a result of the fusion of the machinism and new creative power of the north with the tradition rooted in the soil of the south, the Toltecs, Tarascans, Mayas, Incas, etc., and would like to choose that as the subject of my mural."

Rivera called his mural the "Marriage of the Artistic Expression of the North and of the South on this Continent." Today it's commonly known as "Pan American Unity."

The center panel of the 74-foot wide by 22-foot high mural features the Aztec deity Coatlicue on the left, and an auto-plant stamping machine from industrial Detroit on the right. "The center axis fuses two images, the reconciliation of the north and the south of this continent," says William Maynez, a member of the Diego Rivera Mural Project steering committee. "Rivera's finding a way to generate pan-American unity."

But the mural also portrays Rivera's political views.

**Stalinist assassins made a failed attempt on Trotsky's life at his home in Mexico City. Rivera's political enemies declared him a suspect ... He feared his life was in danger.**

War in Europe was commanding attention in the American psyche. On April 1, 1939, the Spanish Civil War ended. Supporters of the Spanish Republic, backed by the Soviet Union and Mexico, lost to Fascist forces backed by Germany and Italy.

"After the Spanish Civil War ended," says Maynez, "many die-hard Stalinists found refuge from that conflict in Mexico." A month later, Trotsky, who had already fled to Mexico to escape Stalinists in Europe, moved to a more secure house near Mexico City to better protect himself.

On August 24, 1939, Joseph Stalin and Adolph Hitler signed a non-aggression pact. Members of the political left around the

**Right: The Aztec deity Coatlicue merges with a Detroit auto plant stamping machine in the center panel of Diego Rivera's "Pan American Unity." The mural, housed at City College's Diego Rivera Theatre, is 74 feet and 22 feet.**





world were outraged that the Soviet Union was accommodating Nazi Germany. On September 1, the Nazis rolled into Poland.

"In Mexico ... the fascists are paying for the Communist demonstrations because of the pact," says Maynez. "Rivera is pissed off and writing about how stupid he thinks his fellow Communists are." Rivera denounced government officials in articles he wrote for Mexico City newspapers.

Rivera had always been outspoken. In 1928, after being invited to paint a mural for the Red Army Club in Moscow, he was expelled from the country for anti-Soviet behavior. In 1929, he was kicked out of the Mexican Communist Party for pushing for autonomy from Moscow.

"Rivera is still a Communist, but disenchanted with Stalin and Trotsky," says Maynez. "He wouldn't adhere to any set doctrine, he was more 'banquet' – a little of this and a little of that."

His outspoken views would later find their way into the "Pan American Unity" mural. "In the mural – the polemic part," says Maynez, "he's trying to get the U.S. into the war."

The mural portrays Stalin, Hitler and Benito Mussolini cloaked in eerie white, and surrounded by characters from anti-fascist Hollywood films, such as Charlie Chaplin in "The Great Dictator" and Edward G. Robinson in "Confessions of a Nazi Spy."

To the left of the three dictators, a clenched fist draped in an American flag emerges from the huge machine in the center panel. According to Maynez, this represents Rivera's hope that an aroused America would halt the forces of aggression.

"Pan-American unity is a cosmic, timeless theme," says Maynez. "But the news of the day is, 'We need to stop the Nazis and get the U.S. in the war.' ... Art was Rivera's bully pulpit, what he was using to express his two cents."

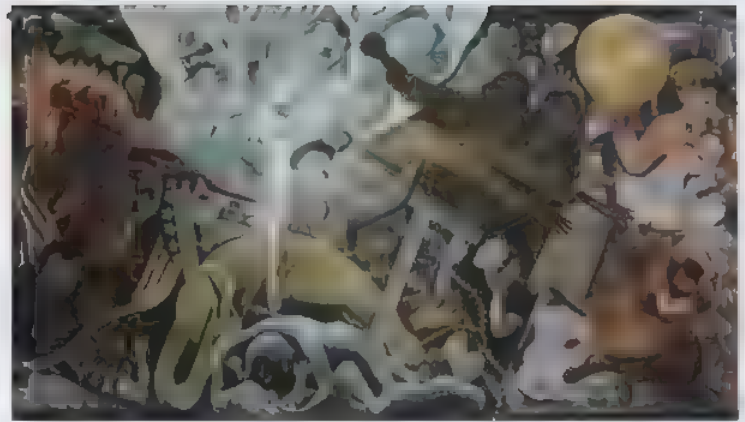
In another panel, Rivera himself is portrayed painting a fresco of a colonial Liberty Tree alongside American heroes: Simon Bolivar, Miguel Hidalgo and Jose Maria Morelos from the south, and George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln from the north.

"The irony," Maynez says, "is he finds the U.S. as his ally."

Seven years earlier, Rivera had left the United States, disgraced. His mural at New York's Rockefeller Center had been steeped in controversy. The press raised objections to Vladimir Lenin's image in the mural. The Rockefellers asked him to remove Lenin from the mural, but Rivera refused. After paying Rivera for his work, the Rockefellers had the fresco sandblasted off their wall. The bad publicity caused Rivera to lose a lucrative contract to paint in Chicago. With no other prospects in the United States, he returned to Mexico.

In May of 1940 Rivera wrote to Pflueger, "For important reasons, I need to leave Mexico City as soon as possible ... Please do not forget this. I should be in San Francisco May 25."

But on May 24, 1940, Stalinist assassins made a failed attempt on Trotsky's life at his home in Mexico City. Rivera's political enemies declared him a suspect. His departure for the United States was delayed. And he feared his life was in danger.



Scenes from anti-Fascist Hollywood films surround Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini. Charlie Chaplin appears several times.



Rivera himself is seen painting a Liberty Tree in the mural. Beside him are political icons from the Americas.



Rivera painted the mural at Treasure Island, the site of the Golden Gate International Exposition.

In early June 1940, after letters of support from Pflueger and the influence of the U.S. Consulate, Mexican authorities finally approved Rivera's trip to the United States. He arrived in Los Angeles accompanied by Chaplin's wife, Hollywood film star Paulette Goddard. It made the newspapers in both Mexico City and Los Angeles.



ARCHIVAL PHOTOGRAPH Gabriel Moulin of Moulin Studios Rivera Collection, Courtesy of the City College Library

Diego Rivera works on the "Pan American Unity" mural.

On June 5, Rivera moved into a studio on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco. He began work on the mural with a team of local artists and craftsmen.

Perhaps due in part to the destruction of his mural in New York, Rivera made the "Pan American Unity" fresco semi-portable. He created the mural on 10 steel-framed panels to facilitate its planned relocation to City College.

Utilizing the "fresco buono" technique he learned in Italy, Rivera made paint by dissolving finely ground pigment in water and then applying it directly onto the moist plaster. This allowed the colors to penetrate into the surface, instead of merely being painted on. The result was colors that lasted longer.

The mural is not only about politics. Once in San Francisco, anything and everything that caught Rivera's eye was grist for the mural. From Olympic divers, to the newly opened Golden Gate and Bay bridges, to Treasure Island itself, Rivera included images from his daily environment in the mural. The upper panels are a continuous panorama of the Bay Area that merges with Northern California on the right and the Valley of Mexico City on the left.

Rivera even has a picture of Pflueger, holding his plans for the mural's future home, the new library on the Ocean campus.

On August 20, 1940, less than a month after Rivera's crew began working on the mural, an assassin killed Trotsky with an ice axe in Mexico City. In the rendering of the three dictators in his mural, Rivera painted a bloody ice axe in Stalin's hand.

The exposition ended on September 29, 1940, and Rivera worked on the mural for two more months. On December 2, the public was invited back to Treasure Island and an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 people crowded into the old airplane hangar to view the finished mural. Afterwards, the fresco was carefully packed into crates and stored on the island, ready to be moved to its new home at City College as soon as the new library building was finished.

But on December 7, 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor propelled the United States into World War II.

For Pflueger, it meant that his library, with its galley space for Rivera's mural, couldn't be built. Steel and concrete were scarce commodities reserved for the war effort.

Rivera's mural, with its urgings that America should join the fight against fascism, had no place to go once the U.S. entered the war. The crated panels were moved to City College and stored in a shed, where they would remain for 20 years.

In 1946, six years after the completion of the mural, Pflueger passed away. His library was never built.

The McCarthyism of the 1950s meant that Rivera was once again politically out of favor with the United States. Charlie Chaplin and Edward G. Robinson were both blacklisted from Hollywood due to their political beliefs – and Chaplin was forced to leave the country. Ideological censorship was in vogue. The college wanted nothing to do with Rivera's mural.

On November 24, 1957, Rivera died at the age of 70. The mural remained in crates.

In 1961, Pflueger's brother, Milton, who was also an architect, persuaded the college to install the mural in the new theater arts building he had designed for the Ocean campus.

"The mural was meant to be flat, not curved," as it is today, says Maynez. But Milton Pflueger's building – today's Diego Rivera Theatre – wasn't wide enough to accommodate the mural. He had to curve the wall of the theater to fit the mural in.

The mural had a home. And though finally out of its crates, it remained in many respects a hidden treasure.

"The mural is not properly housed," says Julia Bergman, who runs the largest Diego Rivera archive outside of Mexico, at City College's Rosenberg Library. "It never has been." The dimensions of the lobby don't allow visitors to stand back far enough to take in the mural properly.

And public access to the mural was extremely limited.

"Even after it went up, for the next 35 years, you could only see it if the lobby happened to be open," says Maynez. "Now we have students – trained docents, and it's open 40-some hours a week for tours."

There's been talk over the years of moving the mural away from City College. Plenty of institutions would love to have it. But Maynez and Bergman believe that would be a shame. "If we hadn't done such a good job (of making it accessible) in the last 12 years," says Maynez, "I'd have to agree with them."

At one point, there was a plan to move the mural to the big open wall in the lobby of Rosenberg Library, but an inter-departmental custody battle prevented it from happening.

But now, with the theater arts department moving across the street to a new performing arts center, the time is ripe for finally giving the mural the home it deserves. The nascent plans call for a Center for Pan American Unity, shared by nine different departments. The new center will reorient the mural to face north, the way Pflueger and Rivera always envisioned it, with plenty of room for visitors to step back and see it. In addition, the building will feature a glass façade, so the mural will be visible from outside.



## 'It's like having a baby, you have to nurture it.'

— Julia Bergman

"I was at a public forum once and somebody brought up the idea that it ought to be someplace else," says Maynez. But Rivera's daughter, Dr. Guadalupe Rivera Marin, was at the same meeting. "She stood up and said, no – it was always meant to be here (at City College)."

"This was intended originally for CCSF," says Bergman, "We have a responsibility – it's like having a baby, you have to nurture it. There's a certain amount of responsibility that goes with that, and we're trying to be better stewards."

There's still much work to be done. The first step is to hire a specialist to see if the mural can be moved safely. There will need to be private fundraising – and there will be many bureaucratic hurdles to overcome. But Maynez and Bergman are determined to see it happen.

Considering what the mural has been through so far, you have to like their chances.

Dave de Give  
ddegive@yahoo.com



Architect Timothy Pflueger holds the plans for a new library to house the mural.



William Maynez, who manages the college's physics lab, is a member of the Diego Rivera Mural Project steering committee.

## Advocate of the arts

When William Maynez describes the "Pan American Unity" mural to visitors at City College's Diego Rivera Theatre, he often speaks of "the reconciliation of art and science."

"Look at the right-hand side," says Maynez. "You have Samuel Morse and Robert Fulton." Morse invented the telegraph, and Fulton engineered the first successful steamboat.

"What's the icing on the cake? They're both painters," says Maynez. "You don't have to wear one hat or the other, you can wear both."

Maynez could just as easily be speaking of himself. By day, he runs the City College physics lab. But he dedicates his spare time to promoting Rivera's mural and the college's eclectic art collection.

"It's a way to engage in my Mexican roots," say Maynez, who studied painting at San Francisco State University.

It's also Maynez taking stock of what's around him. Leaving his Science Hall office, he points out the two recently restored Fred Olmsted murals just inside the front entrance. Olmsted created "Theory" and "Science" at the 1939-1940 Golden Gate International Exhibition (GGIE), the same place Rivera created his mural. The common thread is San Francisco architect Timothy Pflueger, who designed the Science Building and ran the "Art in Action" exhibit at the fair (see main story).

Last August, Maynez wowed de Young Museum patrons with a lecture on Rivera, Miguel Covarrubias (another GGIE artist) and the San Francisco murals tradition. He's led art tours throughout the city for the Bay Area Art Conservation Guild, the San Francisco Garden Club and the Art Deco Society of California. And he's been invited to speak this spring at the Phoenix Art Museum.

Not a bad repertoire for the Science Hall's most devoted art enthusiast.



# DIAMOND DAVE

City's punk hippie turned on, tuned in, but never dropped out

by Deia de Brito

He's commonly known as the mayor of Haight Street.

Last year, the San Francisco Bay Guardian designated him – and his friend Wavy Gravy – local heroes.

He's a protester, a pauper, a parent, a poet and a pirate radio king.

In September, he caravanned across the country to raise hell at the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minn.

You can't miss Diamond Dave Whitaker on campus – his weathered face, penetrating blue eyes, long stringy gray hair and a single dreadlock hanging below a colorfully knit fisherman's hat. He hasn't bought an item of clothing since Dwight Eisenhower was president. Pre-worn designer shoes – laces perennially untied – accent his tattered jeans, tie-dye T-shirt and logger flannel.

He subsists on coffee, American Spirit cigarettes and whatever he can scavenge out of grocery store dumpsters.

He's a father of nine children by three different partners. His oldest, Jonathan, 50, is "the Karl Rove of the Connecticut Democratic Party." His youngest, Tilly (conceived at a Rainbow Gathering 18 years ago) graduated from high school last year and lives in Eugene, Ore

Chances are you've heard his voice. He's a regular caller on Michael Krasny's radio program, "Forum," on KQED-FM and co-hosts "Common Thread Poetry and Politics" on Pirate Cat Radio. He also founded "Poems Under the Dome," the annual open mike at San Francisco City Hall.

Whitaker's story goes on and on ... and so does he. A stream of consciousness as long as the Nile.

He's a full-time labor studies major at City College. An Associated Students senator and former vice president of Cultural Affairs, some students may rec-



PHOTOGRAPH Al Lin

ognize him as the "old hippie" who riffs on counterculture and politics in class discussions.

Diamond Dave is the guy who turned Bob Dylan ("Everybody Must Get Stoned") on to weed. And on to Woody Guthrie, the troubadour's inspiration.

Dylan, in his autobiography, calls Whitaker an influential, "Svengali-type Beat."

In 1961, he watched the first Freedom Rides head south to protest segregation. In 1962, he lived on a kibbutz in Israel. In 1963, he stood in front of the Lincoln Monument when Martin Luther King

delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. Afterward, he partied with Dylan and Joan Baez. He's participated in hundreds of protest rallies and nearly every Rainbow Gathering since 1973.

From the beginning, Whitaker was a non-conformist. And, at 71, he still is.

At his birthday party in November, punk bands played for hundreds of pierced and tattooed young people, who arrived on bicycles to the warehouse he calls home. Whitaker's contemporaries, clutching whiskey bottles and passing joints between weathered fingertips, fit right into the party's theme: "Punk as Fuck at 71."

The warehouse, hidden between freeways near the Alemany Farmers' Market, shelters about two dozen "Freegan" bohemians. Others live in the backyard, in vegetable-oil powered hippie buses near a garden and a large rotting compost pile.

One of the birthday boy's pals serves "Rock 'n' Roll spaghetti" — Whitaker's trademark recipe — sugared onions sautéed in tomato sauce. Accordions, trumpets, saxophones and saws erupt into an impromptu jam session. In another room, punks of all ages jump rope to the beat in a game of double Dutch. By three in the morning, Whitaker is passed out on the floor of the warehouse's industrial kitchen.

## 'I turned Dylan on to radical politics, the Beats, the bohemian style, the folkies. I may have gotten him stoned for the first time.' — DIAMOND DAVE WHITAKER

en. He's not drunk or stoned — he doesn't use anymore. He says he's "rewired." He gets a contact high from people.

"Did you see Dave on the middle of the floor?" asks Virginie Corominas, former vice president of Finance at City College. "That way he can sleep while still being in the middle of the action."

Every night, Whitaker wakes up twice to listen to online radio — at 3 a.m. to BBC online and at 5 a.m. to WBUR Boston. By 7 a.m., he's on the bus to City College.

In the afternoon, he comes home from school and reads. His unmade bed is covered with books.

"I've always been broke," he says. "I've always lived on the edge. But I'm never poor and I'm never bored, as long as I've got my library card."

On Thursdays, he rides the bus to Station 40, an anarchist collective in the Mission, where he chops vegetables for Food Not Bombs' soup kitchen. Over the years, he and his family have depended on free meals like these.

He serves peppery squash soup at sundown to BART commuters in suits, gold-toothed teenagers in sagging pants, hipsters in skinny jeans, and crack addicts barely able to hold their paper cups still. At 9 p.m. he reads his poems at the 16th Street BART station open mike.

His day ends at midnight, when he takes the bus home to the warehouse.

Just before the November presidential election, Whitaker sits in the front row of a mass media class with the San Francisco Chronicle, the New York Times, and The New Yorker open on his desk. He greets students as they walk in.

"Did everyone register to vote?" he asks. Whitaker makes no secret about his support for Barack Obama.

"Remember to vote yes on B, the affordable housing measure," he tells the class. During the past four decades, Whitaker has lived in abandoned buildings, communes, warehouses and hippie buses. He's also lived on the streets.

After class, student Gary Jay says he's known Whitaker since the 7th grade. Whitaker used to read books to his class and lead after school beach cleanups.

During his two-year stint as vice president of the Associated Students' Cultural Affairs program, which ended last semester, Whitaker started the City College Spoken Word Festival.

He also hosted "Hump Day" — a weekly music and poetry festival featuring DJs, rappers, jazz bands, the college drum class and published poets.

At the Republican National Convention in September, Whitaker volunteered with Seeds of Peace and Food Not Bombs. He delivered free meals in a rickshaw and read his poetry to protesters.

Hundreds were arrested that week. He joined in street blockades, running from cops who fired tear gas and flash grenades, and was only 10 feet away from award-winning broadcast journalist Amy Goodman and her "Democracy



PHOTOGRAPH Michael P. Smith

Diamond Dave recites his poetry to a crowd at the candlelight open mike held every Thursday above the 16<sup>th</sup> St. BART station.

Now!" crew when police arrested them for conspiracy to riot.

Back in 2005, he camped for two months in Mississippi, working with volunteers who fed thousands of Hurricane Katrina victims a day.

"FEMA and the Red Cross weren't doing anything," he says.

"There were piles of cars turned over, fishing boats and dead dogs everywhere. It was like Hiroshima or Dresden. My role was to encourage community, to keep people connected. To do more than any of us can do on our own."

In 1953, inspired by Woody Guthrie's "Bound for Glory," 15-year-old Whitaker left a note on his parents' mantle and hopped a freight train from his home in rural Minnesota to Chicago's "Bug-house Square," where radicals ranted on soapboxes. Along the way, he camped with hobos on the side of railroad tracks and listened to fireside stories. He found a job as a dishwasher and lived in a room off the square.

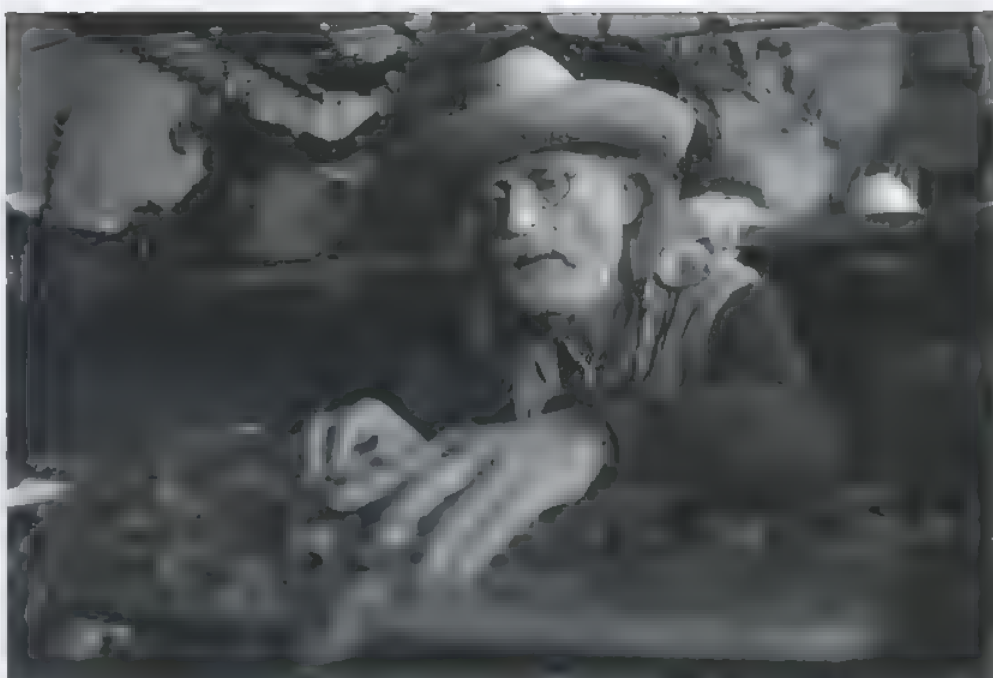
He returned to Minnesota to finish high school. At the University of Minnesota, he read Kenneth Rexroth's piece, "San Francisco's Mature Bohemians" in *The Nation*. The 19-year-old socialist dropped out and headed west to San Francisco, the land of the poets.

When he first visited North Beach's City Lights Bookstore in 1957, copies of Allen Ginsberg's controversial epic poem, "Howl," had just gone on sale.

Outside, identical twins with full beards told him where to get a room for \$10 a night – pads crawling with poets, dope dealers and strippers. They also recommended The Place, which hosted San Francisco's first open mike. Whitaker was in North Beach at Mike's Pool Hall when Jack Kerouac burst through the door with his just-published Beat classic, "On the Road."

In 1959, Whitaker met Bob Dylan – then Bob Zimmerman – at a party in Dinkytown, Minneapolis. Dylan had arrived with a young woman named Gretel Peltó.

In his biography about Dylan, author Bob Spitz writes, "Whitaker darted



PHOTOGRAPH Michael P. Smith

Every Thursday, Whitaker chops vegetables at Station 40 with Food Not Bombs volunteers. Later, they serve hot soup to the hungry at the 16<sup>th</sup> St. BART Station.

around the room and came on like a pop-eyed hipster. Someone introduced him to Bob and Gretel, and it was love at first sight.

"Bobby, extremely susceptible to anyone who was daring, beguiling, and free-spirited, was immediately taken with David. Within days, he, Gretel, and David were inseparable. They spent every day hanging out together – David, the teacher and philosopher, Bobby and Gretel his devoted students. David served as Bobby's first important guru," Spitz writes.

But Whitaker may have done much more than that.

"I turned Dylan on to radical politics, the Beats, the bohemian style, the folkies," he says. "I may have gotten him stoned for the first time.

"In his early days, Dylan claimed he worked in carnivals, was part Indian, and rode freight trains," Whitaker says. "I'm the guy that worked in carnivals, was part Indian, and rode freight trains. I used to tell him those stories."

On May 20, 1960, Peltó and Whitaker eloped. When Peltó became pregnant in 1962, the couple moved into a two-bedroom apartment. Dylan moved in

with them, and slept on the couch. Peltó, Whitaker's ex, is now an anthropologist and professor at Cornell University.

In Spitz's biography on Dylan, Peltó notes: "David had the vision of a poet and insisted there was room for expressiveness, music and creativity here and now in the real world. He lived on the edge long before it became fashionable, and indoctrinated Bobby and me in the ways of the non-conformist."

When their son Jonathan was two years old, she and Whitaker separated. Peltó went off to college and he went to live on a kibbutz in Israel. When he came back to the United States, he met 18-year-old Beverly Sneed in Greenwich Village.

In 1965, Whitaker and his young girlfriend hitchhiked from New York to San Francisco. Sneed was pregnant with his second child, Ubidube. They would have six more children together – Ricochet, David, Sampson, Sapphire, Grace and Joy. Each about nine months apart.

Whitaker relied on the Digger's Free Store in Haight-Ashbury, the Black Panthers' Free Store in the Fillmore, and soup kitchens like St. Anthony's to make ends meet.



"People started making their own music and moving to Haight Street," he recalls. "We started seeing people that looked like us. People were sleeping where they fell."

At the time, people were leaving the city for the suburbs and there were many empty apartments in the Haight.

## Diamond Dave has always been a rhomboid peg in a square hole. A diamond in the rough.

"So we'd just move in," Whitaker said. "Open a window in the back to get in. There was electricity and you could stay there for months. People would go out and bring back free food."

In the early 1970s, Whitaker, who had never had a full-time job, began working as a counselor for the California Employment Development Department in a program he calls "New Careers." Poor people trying to improve their lives were paid to work and go to school.

Ubidube remembers those days as the only time his father wore a suit and sported a short haircut. He used to hang out at the KPOO radio station, where Whitaker hosted "One Struggle, Many Fronts."

His dad interviewed director Francis Ford Coppola, Peter Berg of the Diggers, organizers from the United Farm Workers, and Peoples Temple cult leader Jim Jones.

Ubidube, who now works with seniors at Home Health Advocates, says times were tough.

"My mom's black and he's white and there was static about that. In Bayview-Hunter's Point people threw rocks through the window," he recalls.

But there were advantages to being the son of Bob Dylan's mentor. Ubidube, who plays electric bass in a funk band, remembers receiving a surprise package in the mail as a kid. Bob Dylan had sent him a Fender Telecaster as a birthday gift. It was his first guitar.

"That's what kept me sane," says Ubidube. "Acid was around me. We'd be at the park at four in the morning — tripping,

Luckily I didn't do much because I saw a lot of people go crazy."

There were times when Whitaker was absent as a father.

"Alcoholism is a progressive disease," he says. "Years of ups and downs." He remembers waking up hung over with a 40-ounce beer bottle in each pocket,

handcuffed to a bench in front of boarded-up Polytechnic High School near Kezar Stadium.

Whitaker's poem, "Here at the Bottom Looking Up," written when he lived in one of Polytechnic's locker rooms, describes seeing the ghosts of former students amid broken lockers and empty bottles of booze.

"I can hear the voices of the children long passed," he wrote.

Whitaker needed a half-pint of whiskey in the morning to start his day. One morning, he glanced at his reflection in a store window. It haunted him. His coat was tattered. His face was a mess.

A handwritten sign on an open door in the Haight read: "Opening soon: Haight Ashbury Treatment Center." He walked in.

The owners were looking for a recovering addict to run workshops for the new clinic. They offered him the job. A few weeks later, he was leading AA meetings and poetry workshops.

He's been sober now for 11 years.

Despite his addiction, he managed to volunteer in soup kitchens every day, serve on the Board of the Haight Ashbury Food Program, and help start the San Francisco chapter of Food Not Bombs.

Rainbow Gathering co-founder Barry Adams says Whitaker was arrested many

times for serving free meals in front of City Hall.

"You should never give Diamond Dave money," Adams warns, "because he'll give it away by the end of the block."

Diamond Dave has always been a rhomboid peg in a square hole. A diamond in the rough.

When a circus worker offered him his first job in a traveling freak show in 1953, the 15-year-old felt he was living his dream. He traveled from Chicago's Bughouse Square in a caravan to Midwestern county fairs, where he drew in crowds by shouting, "Freaks, geeks, and curiosities — the strangest and most unusual people on the face of the earth. Step right in!"

He felt at home with the circus's strong man who could lift a pony with his teeth, a Southern hillbilly who walked on his hands, and a man with flipper arms who dealt cards with his toes.

"I loved it. It was like a family," Whitaker says. "Little did I know that I'd be involved with freaks my whole life."

Deia de Brito

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Whitaker walks through the Haight Street tunnel in Golden Gate Park on his way to Hippie Hill, one of his favorite haunts since the Summer of Love.

PHOTOGRAPH Tara Spalty

# SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL

## City College is a hub for students from abroad

by Lauren Riggs Photography Al Lin

Michele Zimmerman's workspace isn't only an office – it's a sanctuary. International students frequently stop by, knowing they'll have an outlet to share the stories of their days, their semesters ... their lives.

Zimmerman is the Activities and Student Services Coordinator for the City College Intensive English Program. But she has her own story to tell – she's the polyglot product of an international love story.

Her German father fled the Nazi regime to France, where he met her mother. Through some ingenuity and help from friends, they were able to meet again and marry in the United States.

Zimmerman, who was raised in Germany, settled in San Francisco after attending college in New York.

"I know how it feels to be here and come alone," she says.

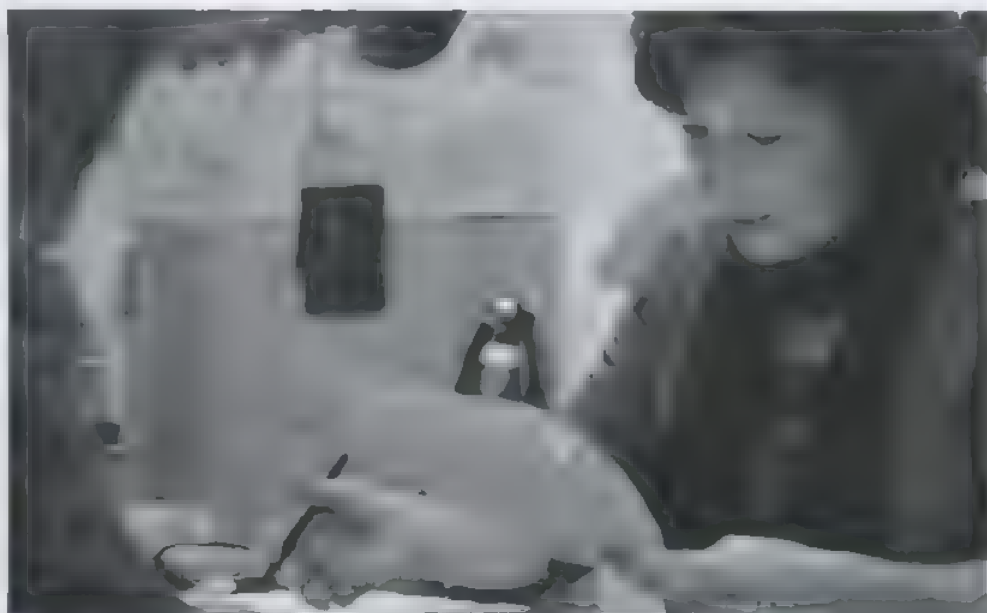
She has worked at City College since 2002, recruiting, counseling and organizing events for international students.

Some of the 50-125 students in the program each semester arrive relatively fluent in English. Others spend months unable to communicate with American housemates.

For Michele Zimmerman, part of her job is just to listen. "What I have learned," she says, "is that each and every one of our students has a story."

CJ wears glasses, a baseball cap and a striped polo shirt. A silver chain around his neck has two charms: a silhouette of Iraq and a page from the Quran. His black stubble is flecked with gray.

He says he hasn't been very religious since the invasion of Iraq, but his mom likes him to wear the charm for safety.



Between classes, Michele Zimmerman helps a student in the Intensive English Program with his application for City College's regular credit program.

The 33-year-old Iraqi studied mechanical engineering before attending City College. Now he studies Farsi, the language of Iran. He wants to be involved in U.S. interactions with Iran, a country he feels threatens Iraqi interests.

CJ (who requested that this story use his nickname) arrived in the Bay Area in 2006 after the U.S. Marine Corps helped him secure a student visa. He alludes that it became too dangerous for him to continue his interpreting job in Fallujah, Iraq.

A year after the 2003 invasion, he joined U.S. forces to fulfill a sense of purpose.

He thought, "I'm going to help these people help my country."

CJ says some Iraqis initially believed their country could be rebuilt into a democracy. However, a post-invasion power vacuum was filled by religious extremists – many from neighboring countries.

Though his interpreting gig has provided income, adventure and possibly a future career, he says the "win-win" job that brought him to the states is marred by loss.

He misses the religiously tolerant, lively Baghdad where young men and women attended college hoping to meet their "soul mates" – often studying English and engineering. The Baghdad he knew no longer exists, and CJ has lost four cousins and several friends in the process.

Of the 400 candidates at his recruitment session in Baghdad, only CJ and two others volunteered to work in Fallujah. He understands why nobody else volunteered.

"The only advertisement for being an interpreter (was) by beheading," CJ says.

CJ feels fortunate he was assigned to the Marines' Civil Affairs Group (CAG) and now calls several members friends.

The timing was a different story – he worked in Fallujah from 2004 to 2006, during the height of violence.

Connecting with interpreter recruiters was a challenge in itself. He returned for four consecutive days to a U.S.-run information compound before he could quietly ask an interpreter about the job.

He told his mother he was going to Jordan for business.

CJ, a Shiite Muslim born about 100 miles south of Baghdad in Najaf, moved to the capital when he was three. His father believed the move would allow his six older sisters to attend college without any restrictions.

Today, his mother and sisters still live in their large house in downtown Baghdad, now pitted by shrapnel and bullet holes. The windows are covered with plastic.

CJ is nearly 9,000 miles from Baghdad and a 10-minute walk from campus, living with three women and another male housemate, who is Jewish. Although the two faiths are historically opposed, he says they love hanging out.

In fact, his childhood friends were of Christian, Sunni and Shia backgrounds.

CJ loves to cook Iraqi food for housemates and guests. However, he says it's been difficult to validate his American friendships to family back home.

"I never thought, 'I'm going to have American friends,'" CJ says. "Especially when the invasion happened – I hated all Americans." But he says CAG aspires to make a difference. "They cared, and they showed they were human."

Recently, acting against the concerns of marine buddies and Iraqi friends and family, he signed on for another stint as an interpreter.

"I'm here, safe, living in good conditions – they are suffering," he says. "I want to do it for my country."

He may return to California some day, but Baghdad is calling him back.

"It was the most beautiful city in the world," he says.

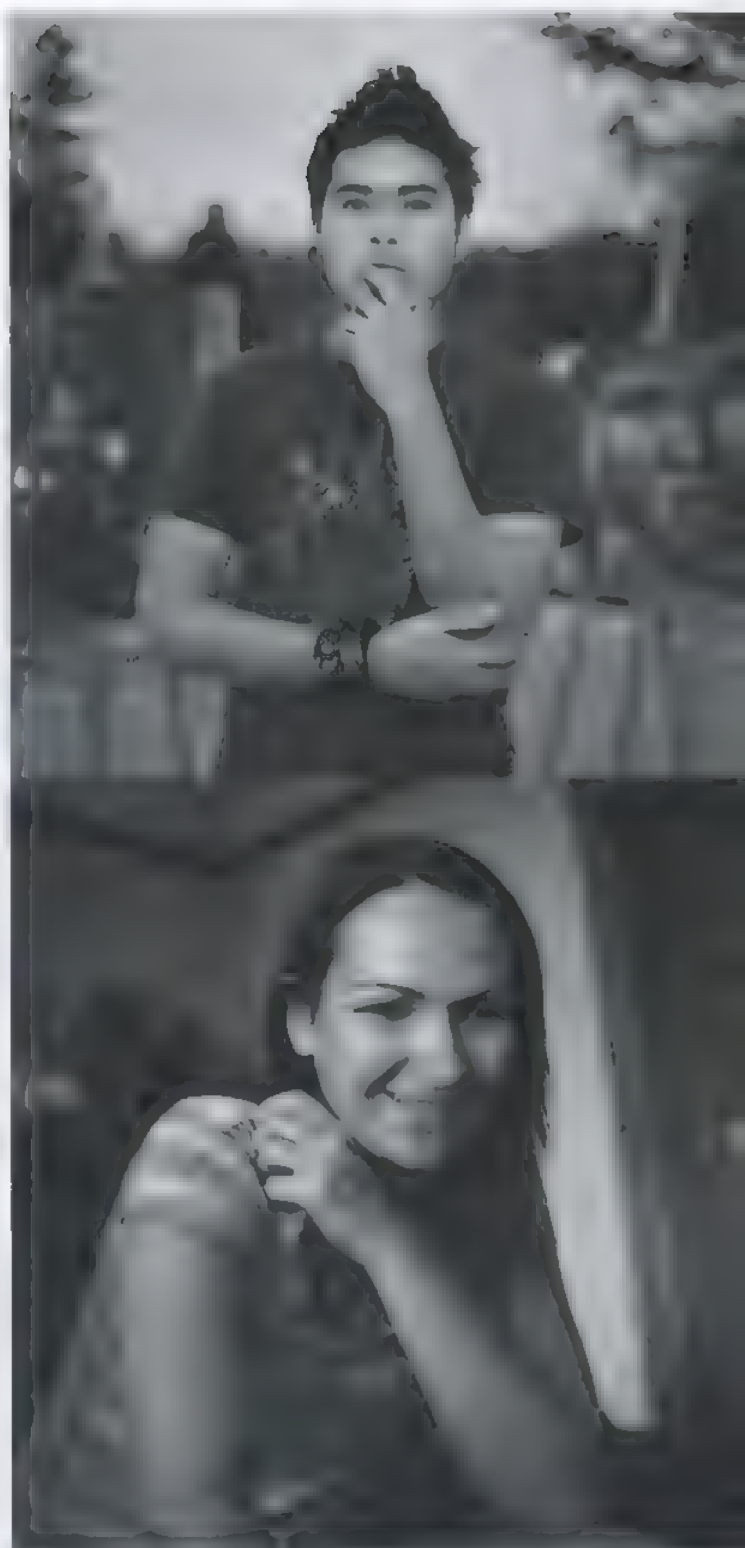
In a backyard garden overlooking Oakland, the Chiang family grows peaches, cucumbers and Chinese broccoli.

Pei Yu "Peggy" Chiang, 21, is in the passenger seat of the family's green, '89 Mazda minivan as her 19-year-old brother pulls into the driveway of their white, two-story house. Both spent seven hours at City College's Ocean campus today.

Peggy studied geography in the Taiwanese capital, Taipei, for one year before moving to Oakland. Her parents agree that business is a more practical major for her here. When she's eligible, Peggy would like to transfer to UC Santa Barbara.

The siblings swap street shoes for house slippers at the front door. Their mother is preparing a vegetarian meal with produce from the garden tended by Peggy's 81-year-old grandfather.

The family still owns a house in Taichung, Taiwan, where the humidity averages 80 percent and the city congregates around outdoor "night markets."



"In Mexico, if you tell someone you are an artist, they believe you. You don't need to have a paper showing that." — Antonio Abadia (*top*)

"Bulgarian people would laugh at me if I studied in a coffee shop." — Mira Guergova (*bottom*)





In Taiwan, "Sometimes we will ask them if they have a cold, but we don't really care that people sneeze."

— Peggy Chiang (top)

"Iraqis are so generous ... If you are a guest in someone's house, they don't let you leave. You have to spend the night. They prepare food for you — enough for a whole feast." — CJ (bottom)

They moved here in 2007 to spend time with Peggy's widowed grandfather, a Bay Area resident for 17 years. Although they might return to Taiwan someday, Peggy is getting used to San Francisco's foggy evenings.

They've all felt a bit out of their comfort zone since immigrating, but Peggy has become increasingly confident initiating friendships with English-speaking classmates.

However, she's still startled when strangers try to make small talk, a practice considered very "weird" in Taiwan.

Peggy's voice mirrors her personality — delicate, measured, and serene. She doesn't much like rock music or having her picture taken — she prefers subtlety.

The family spends most of their time together, and Peggy says she is not accustomed to focusing solely on herself.

Though she doesn't think marrying into a traditional Taiwanese family would be an issue, she worries, "I don't think I can play (as) good a role as my mother."

Her grandfather is a devout follower of Yi Guan Dao, or, the Religion of One Unity. A porcelain Buddha graces the dashboard of her father's new Volvo.

Peggy has strong family values, and although she says she's outgrown other aspects of her religion, it's a cultural reality.

Bay Area culture hasn't changed Peggy's perceptions of Taiwan, but distance makes her hometown seem more beautiful.

She still thinks it odd when people here say, "Bless you," after someone sneezes. In Taiwan, "sometimes we will ask them if they have a cold, but we don't really care that people sneeze." She raves about American restrooms, though, especially the free seat covers.

Peggy says the perception in Taiwan is that an American degree guarantees a bright future. But, she adds, "You have to leave all of your friends behind."

After only a month of instruction in the Intensive English Program, 24-year-old Antonio Abadia speaks English comfortably, and with earnest passion. An eyebrow piercing frames his dark, almond-shaped eyes and a strip of facial hair runs down his chin.

His hometown in Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state, is famed for moss-covered ruins abandoned by Mayan kings. Waterfalls roar within the ever-shrinking rainforest and fertile valleys produce countless rows of corn.

Antonio and his family make a living selling their art out of Tzimol, a town of 12,000 people near the capital.

"We are a very poor family. We are artists," he says. "In Mexico you can survive (selling art), but you can't be rich."

Art has been a powerful force in Antonio's family. "My ancestors ... were the founders of our native town," he says. "(They) were ... musicians, poets, astronomers, writers and now, in our generation, painters." Many people of modern Chiapas live simply. Despite a rich supply of natural resources, the area is one of the most economically underdeveloped Mexican states. A large part of the state's population is of Mayan ancestry.

At home, Antonio often painted indig-enous subjects. In 2006, he founded a nonprofit, non-governmental organiza-tion, called Raíz Indígena that provides space for indigenous people of Chiapas to exhibit and sell their artwork.

"I am not the best painter, and I have never studied art," Antonio says, "but I think it's much better (that way) because you can be yourself."

His paintings often portray the tradi-tions and dress for which the rural town is famous. The colors of food, edifice and garment mirror the rich blues, yellows and magentas of their natural setting.

Antonio says his transition has been more challenging than he expected. It has been difficult to develop a profes-sional portfolio without the many fin-ished canvasses he left at home. So far, he has not sold any paintings in the Bay Area.

"In Mexico, if you tell someone you are an artist, they believe you — you don't need to have a paper showing that."

Although Antonio plans to take photog-raphy and cinematography classes when he completes his English requirement, he is determined to continue painting, as well.

"For me, it's my soul ... you can express everything you are in that painting."



Two years ago, Mira Guergova came to San Francisco for the first time to visit her older sister. She had a revelation: "I want to live here."

It seems the Guergova family is good at setting goals and meeting them. Her parents wanted the family to live in the same city — it had been 15 years since they had all been together in Sofia, Bul-garia.

Now, Mira, her parents, older sister and niece have been living in a cozy Parkside unit since March 2007.

## 'What I have learned is that each and every one of our students has a story.' — MICHELE ZIMMERMAN

Mira, 27, studies accounting at City College. Her parents, who won green cards in the INS Diversity Lottery, study English on campus. Both were journal-ists in Sofia.

Now Mira's dad works at National Car Rental and her mother baby-sits. "They are happy because we are all together," she says.

Mira wears little makeup, but her leopard-print heels reveal a hint of flair. Her living room portraits prove she has changed her hair color more than once over the years.

"I used to hang out with motorcycle guys (and) rockers," she says while flipping through pictures from her high school graduation in Bulgaria. Her then jet-black hair is now a natural auburn.

Mira's only brushes with Bulgarian cul-ture here are a nearby shop that sells Bulgarian cheese and an expat friend who speaks English better than his na-tive tongue. She says it's better to have friends from different countries anyway.

Though her parents sold their 15th-floor apartment in Sofia, they still have a white, stucco cottage in nearby Pobit Kamak village, given to Mira's grand-parents during Communist times.

Vestiges of Communism remain in So-fia. The mafia there is comprised mainly

of ex-professional athletes and wres-tlers from that period, Mira says. They ran many of the nightspots she and her friends frequented as teenagers.

When she was 17, Mira says, she un-knowingly danced with Ivo "The Godfa-ther" Karamanski at his nightclub. The friend she was with panicked.

"They killed him two months later," she adds.

Mira doesn't dwell on the crime in Bul-garia. In fact, she describes Bulgarian life

almost entirely in social terms. It's not unusual for Bulgarian friends to drop by unannounced and talk for hours.

She still can't get used to the fact that American clubs close so early and are empty on weeknights.

Mira works 15 hours a week in the chan-cellor's office in accordance with student visa employment limits. However, she wishes she could legally work at a resta-urant as she did in the south of France.

At 14, Mira visited France for the first time. She later lived there for seven years.

Although she has a degree in Admin-istration and Enterprise Management from Paul Valery University in Mont-pellier, she must continue her studies to maintain a student visa in the U.S.

These days, Mira is focused on her next destination: UC Berkeley. She hopes to transfer next year — and she usually ends up exactly where she aims to be.

City College has been a starting point for many in this city, but for these stu-dents, it's an opportunity to dramati-cally change direction. Their stories span multiple continents, reflect diverse cul-tures, and trace former political regimes. But for now, they've reached the same crossroads.

CJ has chosen to return to Iraq to help rebuild his country.

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# JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS

Former Rams guard learns that playing by the rules is only half the game

by Mitzi Mock

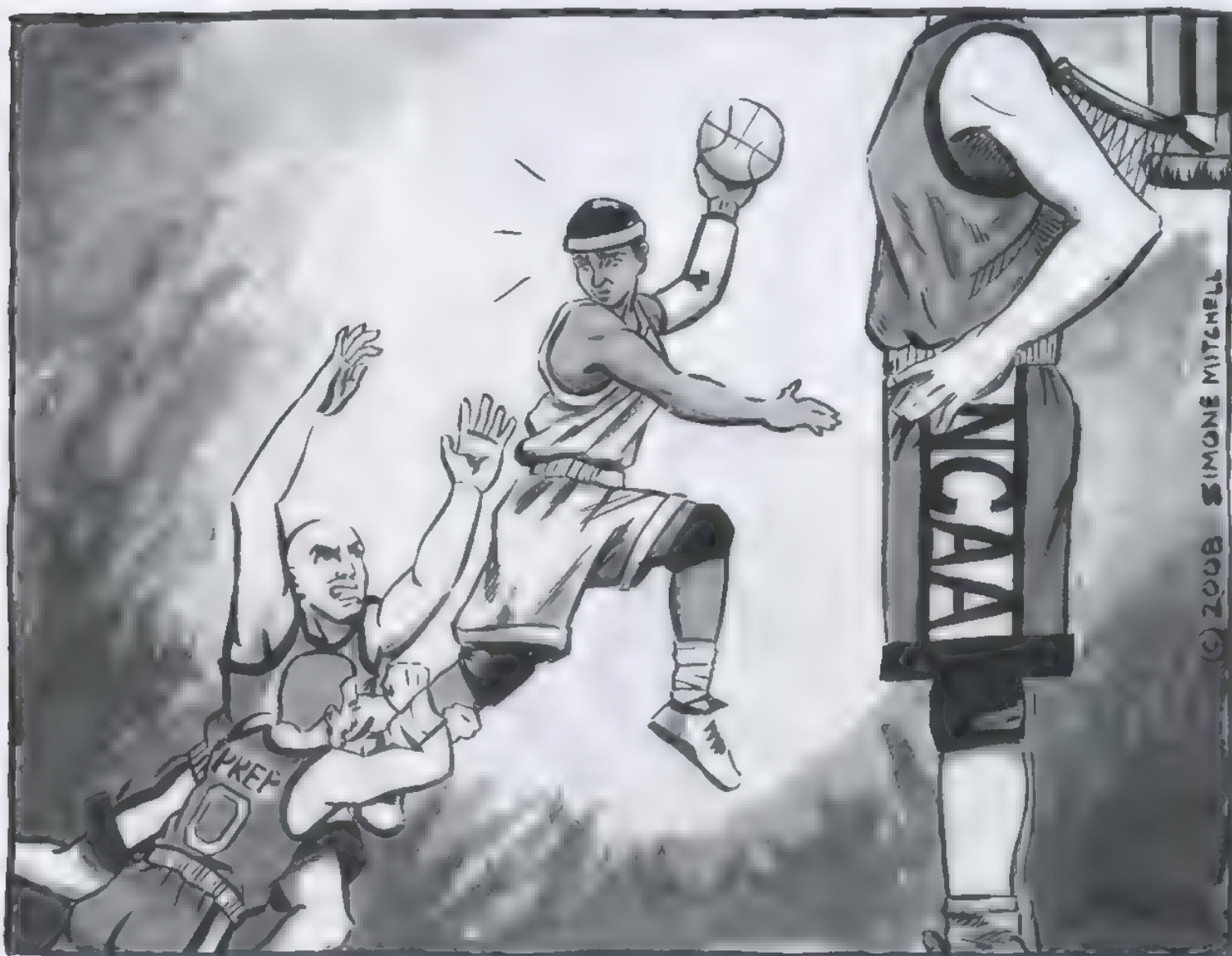


ILLUSTRATION Simone Mitchell

Winter is here and Robert Sallie couldn't be more excited to wear shorts and a jersey. This season, the City College graduate will make his debut as a guard for the University of Memphis, the college basketball team that nearly defeated Kansas for the NCAA title last spring.

"It feels amazing to finally be here," says Sallie. "Walking down the streets of Memphis people show you so much love."

Memphis fans are excited to see what Sallie has to offer. With an average of 15.6 points, 5.5 assists and 6.5 rebounds per game, Sallie led City College to a 29-4 record last year. In his one season with the Rams, the 6-foot-5-inch, 190-pound guard was named the California Junior College Player of the Year.

But as excited as he is to play for Memphis, he's more enthused about his future. No, not the NBA — his academic future.



**'It was the most unusual series of academic reviews I've ever been involved with. If kids couldn't document it, the NCAA didn't accept the credibility of their grades.'**

**— DON JACKSON, ROBERT SALLIE'S ATTORNEY**

"I have to pick a major," he says. "My first goal is to get a college degree."

It may be surprising to hear a student athlete so keen on school, but for Sallie, thinking about majors is a relief. Since 2004, he has been stuck in an academic quagmire — partly the result of his choices and partly the product of the precarious institutions that shape the world of college basketball. Not even his associate degree could entirely prevent challenges to his academic eligibility.

It's no secret that the recruiting process for college basketball is a game as complex and competitive as the sport itself. The stakes can be so high that students, colleges and even high schools have been known to bend academic requirements for athletes. In recent years, news of these abuses has increased public pressure on the NCAA and academic institutions to enforce strict eligibility policies and expose those who break the rules.

But as Sallie found out, even playing by the rules — which he insists he did — can work against you if you're stuck in a power play between parties with something to prove.

Sallie admits that he's always performed better on the court than in class. As a student at Valley High School in Sacramento, his swift, versatile playing style helped lead his team to the sectional championship two years in a row, garnering him attention from elite college basketball programs. But his academic record was nothing to rave about. It fell short of the NCAA's initial eligibility requirements for Division I basketball — a sliding scale between GPA and SAT scores.

He asked himself: "Do I want to barely graduate high school or redo my senior year at a prep school?"

Prep schools have long been an answer for student athletes struggling in high school. Advocates say an extra year at a prep school gives students a chance to mature and benefit from resources like smaller classes and personal tutoring. But critics say some are just a farce: diploma mills that care more about producing star athletes than stellar students.

If that's so, Sallie volunteered for the mill twice.

He first went to the Laurinburg Institute, a school in Laurinburg, N.C., that has a reputation for excellence in basketball. However, while his grades improved, his overall academic record still failed to meet NCAA standards at the end of the year. Unwilling to give up, he decided to do a second year at The Patterson School, another North Carolina prep school with a strong athletic program.

"I did everything I had to do," says Sallie, who insists that his time at these institutions improved his study habits. "I worked my tail off."

By the time he graduated from Patterson in 2006, his test scores and grades met NCAA requirements — at least on paper.

That year, recruiters from some of the best college basketball programs in the country — Memphis, Maryland and even Kansas — were looking at Sallie. But it was the University of Nebraska — a team that has never made an NCAA tournament — that got his attention.

"It just felt right to me — the relationship with the coaches, the players, the community — it was bigger than basketball," he says.

The Nebraska community was just as eager to make him a part of their family.

"The fact that teams like Kansas were looking at him indicated how good he was," said Brian Rosenthal, who covers Nebraska basketball for the Lincoln Journal Star.

"Robert's recruitment, combined with the arrival of a new coach (Doc Sadler), was supposed to turn the program around."

But while the Nebraska fans were growing excited for the 2006-2007 season, Sallie was getting anxious. The fall semester was about to start, and he was still waiting for official clearance from the NCAA.

As the arbiter of eligibility, the NCAA says when a student is able to play college sports and receive an athletic scholarship. But the organization, which reviews over 160,000 student records a year, has no policy in place to ensure that student athletes know if they are academically eligible before the start of the school year.

And in 2006, shifts in the climate of college sports left more students than usual stuck in academic limbo.

The dark cloud that had surrounded prep schools for years had become a storm.

After an exposé by the New York Times uncovered a prep school that had no classes or instructors, the NCAA began doing what critics say it should have done years ago: crack down on prep schools.

Both of Sallie's prep schools were being investigated in 2006. The NCAA did not automatically disqualify student athletes from those schools. However, for alums starting college in fall 2006, the NCAA reserved the right to review their individual academic records.

In August 2006, with Nebraska's fall semester already in progress, Sallie still hadn't received a definitive answer from the NCAA.

The uncertainty was made more complicated by academic policies unique to Nebraska and the other universities that fall under the Big 12 Conference.

The Big 12 requires that any student athlete who enrolls at a member school, such as Nebraska, must meet all NCAA eligibility requirements at the time he enrolls. The rule was controversial from its start because it's stricter than the NCAA's policy, which at least allows student athletes to enroll in college while they are waiting to be cleared.

Sallie was stuck.



PHOTOGRAPH Jennifer Nichols

For Roburt Sallie, City College was a proving ground. He completed his A.A. degree in less than two years and was named California Junior College Player of the Year.

After years of struggling in class, "I didn't want to fall behind in school again," he said. But if he enrolled before being officially eligible, he would be banned from playing basketball for Nebraska, and he would lose the athletic scholarship he was counting on for tuition. Nebraska compliance officials suggested he attend class, but not enroll.

Less than a week later, the NCAA denied his academic eligibility.

When he appealed, the NCAA came back challenging the work he had done at Laurinburg, his first prep school. They wanted proof of his grades: homework, quizzes and teacher grade books.

Sallie was stunned.

"Who keeps work from a year and a half ago?" he said.

He noted that in the past year and a half he had moved twice, keeping very little along the way.

"It was the most unusual series of academic reviews I've ever been involved with," said Don Jackson, an attorney who represented Sallie and several other prep school students that year. "If kids couldn't document it, the NCAA didn't accept the credibility of their grades."

But Jackson and Sallie played by the rules. They were able to gather teachers' grade books, copies of Sallie's old quizzes and staff affidavits saying he had done the work in their class.

The NCAA still denied his appeal.

"I got caught up in the middle of this prep school scandal," said Sallie. "They cleared other people from (Laurinburg) ... I have no idea why they denied me."

Jackson says mercurial rulings by the NCAA were not uncommon in 2006.

"There was no consistency to the NCAA's review process," Jackson said. "That year it was as ridiculous as having two kids in the same classes, getting the same grades and one being cleared and the other denied."

Stacey Osburn, a spokeswoman for the NCAA, says prospective student athletes from schools cleared for fall 2006 — like Laurinburg — should have been reviewed like any other high school student. While she declined to speak about Sallie's specific case, Osburn said irregularities in transcripts like leaps in grades or excessive course loads can set off red flags.

**'I feel like this is my way of getting back at the NCAA. Look at what I've done. I crammed 16 to 17 units a semester.' — ROBURT SALLIE**

Sallie's grades did go from C's and D's in high school to B's at his prep schools. But Jackson says this shouldn't indicate that the institutions were fraudulent.

"Many of these students came from poor under-funded high schools with 30-40 students in a class," Jackson says. "All of a sudden they're in a class with 12-15 students, and they're getting extra attention and tutoring. What do you think is going to happen?"

Chris Chaney, Sallie's coach at Laurinburg and Patterson, also attributes improvement in his student athletes' academics to a change in environment.

"Not a lot to do where we are. Not much else to do but practice and study," Chaney said. "Roburt became a better player, a better student and a better person. He's a smart kid."

The NCAA cleared Patterson in January of 2007. Laurinburg is still in the same situation; students are not disqualified, but their academic credentials are subject to individual reviews.

For Sallie, the irony of his situation in fall 2006 stung. He spent two extra years in high school to meet NCAA academic standards, and now the institution meant to uphold the academic integrity of student athletes had effectively shut his door to college. Already late in the semester, he couldn't have enrolled elsewhere if he wanted to.

"It's a slap in the face to me and a slap in the face to everyone in prep schools. I want to show the NCAA up, smack them back in the face," said Sallie in a 2007 interview with his hometown newspaper, the Sacramento Bee.

"I'm not going to give up," he added. He didn't. He enrolled at City College.

"His back was against the door," said Rams coach Justin Labagh, who says Sallie is the best player to come along in 10 years. "When he came to City College, he knew what he had to do."

Last May, the student who once struggled to pass high school classes completed his associate degree after only a year and a half. The degree makes him eligible to play for a four-year university, regardless of his prep school record.

"I feel like this is my way at getting back at the NCAA. Look at what I've done. I crammed 16 to 17 units a semester," he said.



But Sallie's success in school wasn't just a product of revenge.

"I'm older now, more mature and focused," he said, adding that school meant more than collecting credits.

"I loved my African-American studies classes. I liked learning about my cultural history."

With his academic progress on track by fall 2007, Sallie re-signed with Nebraska to play in fall 2008. But days after his City College graduation in May 2008, Sallie learned that he was permanently banned from playing or receiving an athletic scholarship from any Big 12 school.

It turns out Nebraska's academic services department formally enrolled Sallie back in 2006 while he was still academically ineligible to play, putting him in violation of the Big 12's rule.

Sallie thought he had just attended classes. So did Doc Sadler, Nebraska's head coach. That's why he saw no problem re-recruiting Sallie for fall 2008. The school's compliance officials told him of Sallie's previous enrollment for the first time in May 2008.

"In this particular situation, we did not do a good job of communicating," Sadler said at a press conference, referring to the school's academic, athletic and compliance officials. "I could sit here and give you excuses that might sound good, but there are not any."

"It's all very frustrating," Sallie said. "My father and I wanted to fight (the Big 12 ban)."

But it was too late. Nebraska had already submitted a waiver on Sallie's behalf, but the Big 12 council denied it.

For the second time, an organization meant to protect the academic integrity of college sports slammed the college gates in Sallie's face – not for his lack of academic accomplishments, but for being enrolled in classes before someone decided he was eligible to play sports.

"I can't believe only two (council members) voted to keep me in," he said. "I mean, what more do I have to do to prove myself?"

But it's not clear if the Big 12 was penalizing Sallie or Nebraska.



PHOTOGRAPH Joe Murphy  
Courtesy of the University of Memphis

After endless trials, Sallie triumphs on the court during the University of Memphis' season-opening exhibition game in November.

"The Big 12 seems to be punishing (Nebraska) for not having checks and balances in place," said coach Labagh, who believes academic officials have become increasingly gun-shy about decisions that could be perceived as abuses of eligibility rules. "There are so many jobs on the line. They're really careful, especially in basketball."

For Sallie this point is moot. It may have taken him the past four years to successfully navigate the labyrinth of rules and regulators that surround the world of college basketball, but he isn't bitter about the walls he hit along the way.

"Maybe a little," he said a day before flying out to Memphis. "But it was a blessing in disguise. Everything worked out in the end."

Interestingly enough, Sallie will be reuniting with two former teammates from Laurinburg at Memphis.

He hopes this season will be his chance to play in an NCAA tournament and help Memphis to a national championship. But he hasn't lost sight of the goal that means just as much to him, if not more.

"I have an A.A. degree," he said. "No one can take that away from me."

Now I'm going to be the first person in my family to get a (bachelor's) degree. I value that like a national championship."

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# MOPED MANIACS



## Where pedals meet the pavement

by Desmond Miller Photography Michael P. Smith



Droves of two-wheeled monsters are on the loose in San Francisco.

The Creatures of the Loin make no excuses as they hightail around the Tenderloin. And these moped gangsters hate reporters ... generally.

Back in 1953, Marlon Brando led the Black Rebels Motorcycle Club roaring down the streets in "The Wild One," and they typically ended up in a rumble. Since 2006, "Founder Graham," as the Creatures call their charismatic leader, has been leading his pack into the night on a different quest: beer and tacos. And when they run out of gas, they pedal.

It turns out you don't have to knock over a bank or smuggle drugs to be a gang. In fact, most of the Creatures are pretty nice people. Their "media blackout" has been in place since 2006, but it's not because they're criminals, and it's not because the "kits" that make their bikes go 60 to 80 mph are only semi-legal. They're just tired of the press making fun of them.

Things got ugly in 2007, when a reporter broke into the inner sanctum of the Creatures' dangerous moped subculture. To the SF Weekly's chagrin, they found only a clan of about 50 well-educated students, artists and beatniks.

The reporter got word that one co-founder had split off to create his own gang. When the Creatures saw the story developing into something more about internal squabbling than moped culture, they got pissed. And the SF Weekly rode that anger right into print.

"It was a total beat-up," says David Cox, a media arts instructor at City College who has been with the gang since 2006. "The SF Weekly were looking to start a fight, basically. They were really egging us on."

As Cox sees it, the angry biker gang angle wasn't working, and the SF Weekly was just looking to sell papers. But in the meantime, they managed to insult the gang and its key members.

Moped enthusiasts rally on Stockton Street while cruising San Francisco's 49-mile scenic drive in September.

"You have a group of guys who are very self-conscious about representation," says Cox. "They're not stupid kids; they are educated and I think the mainstream press underestimates them."

Graham French co-founded the Creatures with Benjamin Broad in the summer of 2005 because they were tired of wheeling around San Francisco on bicycles. The alternative: cheap mopeds

## After all, moped devotees aren't made. They're born. The Creatures don't recruit.

from Craigslist. They fell in love on the first test drive.

Several months later, they learned the vendor was planning to move to Thailand — sans the 50 mopeds in his backyard. French and his clan bought every one of them at 50 bucks apiece.

The problem was they had no idea how to work on them, and motorcycle shops charge up to \$80 an hour to putz around trying to fix them. "They are so much different from regular scooters," says French. "They don't even know where to start."

One day, while searching the Internet for hard-to-find parts, they discovered the Moped Army. Soon after, they joined the Army and "became a bona fide gang," says Jeremiah Robertson, who has been with the tribe for two years. They had stumbled upon the Army's forum, where 2,000 people were sharing tips on moped maintenance and repairs.

The Moped Army is a nationwide phenomenon that began in Kalamazoo, Mich., in 1997. There are chapters all over the country, each with a local flavor, like the Mosquito Fleet in Seattle, the Bourbon Bandits in Louisville, and the Murder Club in Chicago. There are even a few people who post to the Army's Web forum from the Netherlands, Germany and Russia.

They also use the forum to swap parts, and these gangs recycle everything. A Bourbon Bandit in Louisville with a spare alternator would rather ship it to a member of the Decepticons in Michigan than see it go to waste.

The Creatures are the largest chapter in the country, and Robertson says they have a "Cali *über alles* thing." Along with the Land Squids in Sacramento and the Late Birds in Los Angeles, they make up a sixth of the 600-member Moped Army.

Back in September, the Creatures held their biennial rally. More than 150 mopeds from around the country descend-

ed upon the streets of San Francisco. However, this time the press left them alone. "There were a couple of stupid anonymous posts on Craigslist about pollution," says Cox, "but for the most part the press is actually quite disinterested in mopeds."

After all, moped devotees aren't made. They're born. The Creatures don't recruit.

Michael W. Moore is one member who found the Creatures through the Moped Army Web site forum. The advantage of

being with the gang, he says, is glean-ing moped knowledge from more experienced members.

"There are a few guys who have the same model as me," he says. "So if I ever have a problem, I can ask them."

The whole appeal of mopeds, according to Cox, is that they buzz below the radar. "The best subcultures are not 100 percent official," he says, "and that is true of any scene."

The Creatures aren't pretending to be chopper thugs, and they're not a bunch of snot-nosed kids, as the SF Weekly made them out to be. The oldest member, Silver Fox, is in his late 60s, and roughly half the members are women.

"They were just a group of friends who got into mopeds and have fun riding them around town," says Robertson.

So mothers, hide your children. Bartenders, lock up your liquor. When the Creatures of the Loin decide to ride, well, actually they probably won't be looking for trouble. Just beer and tacos. God help us all.

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The Creatures pick up speed in San Francisco's Broadway Tunnel.



Riders fill the intersection of Cole and Waller streets in the Haight Ashbury District shortly after starting day two of the "Gender Bender" moped rally.



Members of the Moped Army climb Lincoln Boulevard in the Presidio.





# THE ROAD TO GREEN CITY

Trailblazing students fight for change by Laurel Moorhead

Kaya Mac Millen and Ildiko Polony, both 26, are on parallel courses.

Mac Millen grew up in Santa Cruz, surrounded by wilderness. He spent his free time hiking and helping his mother in their garden.

Before his junior year of high school, Mac Millen took a job doing trail maintenance for the National Park Service. He went in hoping to make some money through his hobbies, and came out with a career goal: sustainable watershed management.

Polony graduated from Berkeley High School in 2000, and moved to the East Coast as a professional dancer. When Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, she went to New Orleans to volunteer. The three weeks she spent there transformed her.

"I came back changed," she says. "I began figuring out how I wanted to participate in this world ... I began to feel a sense of responsibility and wanted to effect posi-

tive change, and I knew that I had the power to do it."

The two now lead City College's only student-run environmental groups. Mac Millen is president of the Urban Sustainability Alliance and Polony is founder of Green Corps.

They both plan to transfer to the Conservation and Resource Management program at UC Berkeley, but they're not waiting on degrees to make their mark. They're trying to sidestep City College's bureaucracy to achieve state and local sustainability standards here – now.

The college's administrators, on the other hand, work from the top down. A faculty committee is now finalizing the Sustainability Plan, a convoluted tome of guidelines for greening the campus and its curriculum. Years in the making, the plan has not yet been implemented – or even approved – by the college.

As Mac Millen describes it, those who drafted the plan have yet to map out the specifics of its implementation. They can't figure out how to give it teeth.

Which is all the more reason, some faculty members insist, that student involvement is essential to making the plan reality.

"All important movements start with a grass-roots effort," says Peggy Lopipero-Langmo, an environmental expert and City College instructor who mentors both student leaders. She says Mac Millen and Polony have been on the forefront of the college's green movement.

But at a college with no formal policy in place for greening, their work can sometimes seem futile. Their efforts have had mixed success.

Ildiko Polony, founder of the Green Corps, initiated the Bikery, a student-run shop, in 2008.



PHOTOGRAPH Annabelle Day

Kaya Mac Millen, originally from Santa Cruz, tends to the Native Plant Garden in front of the Science Building.

Last semester, Polony asked Crima Pogge, a biology teacher and director of the college's Center for Habitat Restoration, to advise a student-run course on alternative transportation. Their discussion led to the creation of Biology 92.

Pogge, who believes that students are key to pioneering green initiatives, was delighted to help Polony's cause.

Once a student activist herself, Pogge says student culture at commuter colleges is different. "No one has time, and they all have jobs. It's really hard to find students. But when there is a student who



PHOTOGRAPH Annabelle Day



PHOTOGRAPH Annabelle Day

Students work on a hillside above Ft. Baker in Marin during a field trip with the Center for Habitat Restoration.

takes the initiative, students like Ildiko and Kaya ... good things happen."

Polony, who is using the Sustainability Plan as a guide for Green Corps' efforts, is cut from the same cloth. She says that courses like Biology 92 heighten students' awareness and give them skills to move into the burgeoning "green collar" workforce.

The course is an offshoot of Part II of the plan, a draft of which Polony has posted on Green Corps' Web site. Once in effect, it will direct the college to offer green curricula and promote alternative forms of transportation.

Polony commutes to school on a turquoise Bianchi road bike, sometimes wearing a sundress and wedge heels. She dresses simply, and wears her shoulder-length brown curls naturally.

She's had a busy fall semester, between performing in a contemporary dance production called "pinpoint," training three times a week, and running Green Corps. She still finds time to volunteer, though. On days when she helps out with Biology 92's first student proj-

ect, she parks her bike on a rack at the Ocean campus and heads to the Student Union.

Every weekday this fall, under a small canopy covered kiosk, Polony and other student volunteers offered free basic services, equipment recommendations and information on commute routes. An orange paper sign on the side of their toolbox reads, "BIKERY."

Many of the students who enrolled in the first semester of Biology 92 are also Green Corps members. They plan to continue the Bikery service this spring, and use the course to explore other ways to get people out of their cars.

While most students were on vacation last summer, Kaya Mac Millen was hunched over the seaside daisies and California fuchsias in the Native Plant Garden on the Ocean campus. Since 2007, the plot, which surrounds the metal statue of St. Francis in front of the Science Building, had been under siege from a non-native weed. Mac Millen and other members of the Urban Sustainability Alliance vowed to save it.

Tall and sharp-featured, Mac Millen wears his long dark hair in a braid down his back, a T-shirt depicting four Native American chiefs and a blue bandana tied around his forehead.

He says the garden, which ecology students initiated in 2006, is an exercise in preservation.

Just as importantly, however, it's an example of the kind of sustainable landscaping the college could bring to all new construction projects — like the Orfalea Family Center and the new Performing Arts Center.

While imported plant species are popular among landscapers, they push out local plants, and with them native animal species. According to the lab text for Biology 41L, the course that initiated the Native Plant Garden, the plot creates a "mini-habitat for local wildlife."

Students who maintain the garden learn that San Francisco is on the Pacific Flyway. Birds migrate along the coast every year, some starting their journey in Alaska and making their way down to South America.



**'It seems there is a fundamental lack of understanding. The goal is to get students involved, but how are we to do that when they are disregarded?'**

**— PEGGY LOPIPERO-LANGMO**

"By using their choice food sources and shelters," Mac Millen says, "we will ultimately increase biodiversity." The garden demonstrates the bigger picture — the ecosystem thrives when native plants flourish.

Mac Millen points out plants as he walks down the stairs toward the garden, which look dry and dead in the fall. Sea thrift, San Francisco wallflower, dune knotweed, coyote mint ... New Zealand flax.

He says he doesn't typically know the names of non-native species. However, he learned a few last year when he asked Vice Chancellor Jim Blomquist to show him the landscaping plans that accompanied renovations at Cloud Hall.

The plans confirmed Mac Millen's fears. "They weren't at all what the Sustainability Plan calls for," he says. Of the 24 plants on the list, only the Manzanita shrub was native. Many would require watering.

The Urban Sustainability Alliance created a petition to change the plans and gathered 300 signatures, but they were too late. Landscaping had already begun.

"Ultimately we were trying to be watchdogs," he says. "It may have been a done deal before we even got started."

Mac Millen was disappointed again this summer when Steve Fross, a City College facilities management employee, asked him why he was tending to a garden that would soon be gone.

As part of the construction plans for the new Performing Arts Center, a building which seeks to be LEED certified, the college planned to put a fountain in the middle of the Native Plant Garden. The fountain, donated by the California Academy of Sciences, would cost over \$750,000 to repair and install, Mac Millen says, and would ruin the garden.

**Scott Marshall (left), a volunteer bike mechanic, fixes Colin Durfee's derailleur at the Bikery. Durfee rides to the Ocean campus from the Tenderloin.**

The Urban Sustainability Alliance is still negotiating the fountain's placement. Recently, Mac Millen presented the college's Facilities Review Committee with options that would spare the garden. He has also written letters to the California Academy of Sciences, the San Francisco Chronicle and the San Francisco Bay Guardian.

It's incidents like this that discourage student activism.

"It seems there is a fundamental lack of understanding," says Lopipero-Langmo, who supports Mac Millen in his efforts to change the plans. "The goal is to get students involved, but how are we to do that when they are disregarded?"

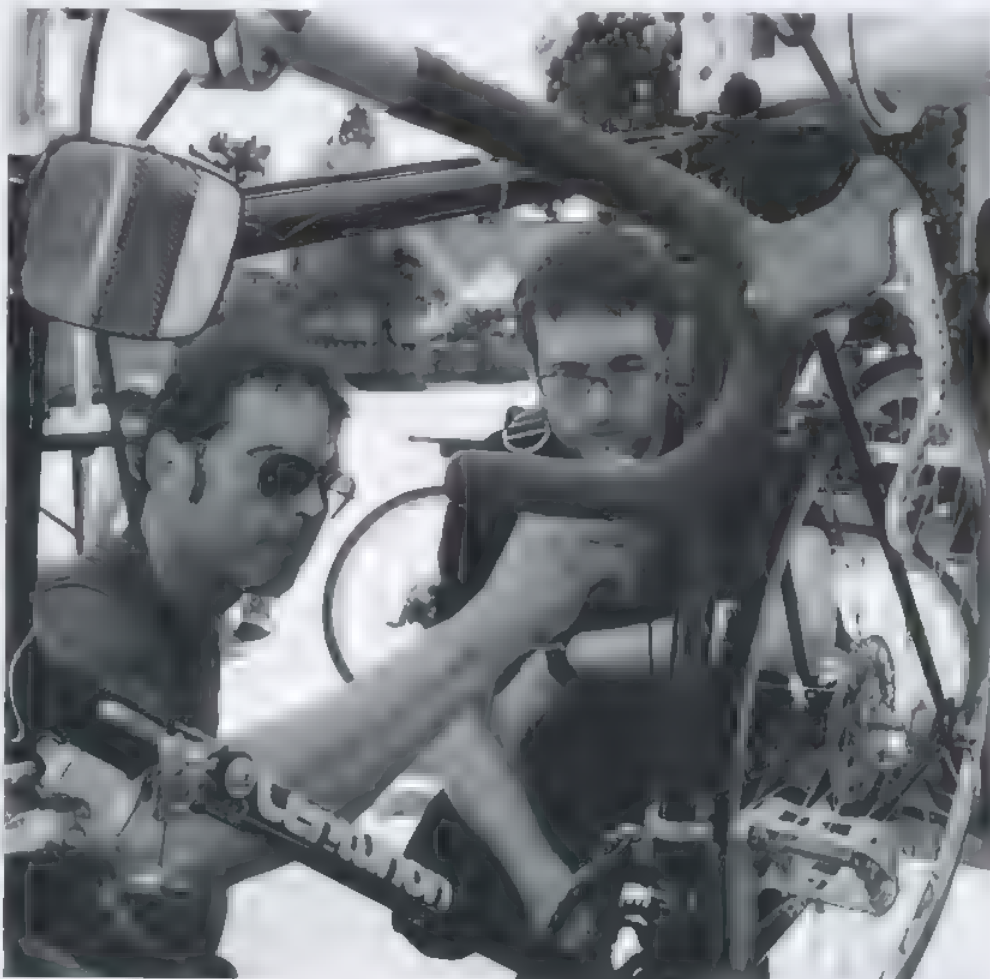
She concedes that bringing the college up to code is a slow-moving process on the administrative level. An energy

audit last year addressed campus efficiency measures, including the use of lighting, heating and air conditioning. The college, for all its efforts to build new green structures, has so far failed to initiate the audit's recommendations for existing buildings.

"This institution is big," Lopipero-Langmo says, "and it's hard to effect change."

Polony stays in contact with Mac Millen, and is aware of his troubles. She says college officials shouldn't be scapegoated for failure to implement a plan which is not yet policy.

"(Vice Chancellor) Blomquist isn't against the plan," she says. "We just need better communication and a unified effort, which means we need leaders, and those leaders need to be students."



**PHOTOGRAPH Annabelle Day**

Crima Pogge knows first-hand what kind of legacy a galvanized student movement can leave behind.

Back in 1996, a group of students wanted practical field experience in natural sciences. They teamed up with Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy and began monitoring the mission blue butterfly as site stewards for Wolfback Ridge in Sausalito.

The group also did critical restoration work around the Bay Area, and later became known as the Center for Habitat Restoration. Pogge now heads the center, which offers local habitat restoration internships for City College students. The center was also involved in the creation of the Native Plant Garden.

As a faculty member, Pogge has a history of encouraging student participation in greening. In 2006 she mentored the students who initiated the Native Plant Garden. When Polony approached her this fall, she was developing a "green collar" credit program, through which Environmental Studies students would receive class credit for work experience. Polony's idea fell right in line with hers.

The Bikery was a successful pilot project for collaboration between Green Corps and Pogge's new work-study program. In the future, Pogge and Polony hope to expand to other hands-on projects that better enable students to enter the green workforce.

This semester Pogge will continue to oversee the Bikery, and students will determine the bulk of the curriculum.

"I don't think it's really the instructor's place to initiate these things," she says, pausing to look for the right words. "Or it's a fine line. Of course, I try to initiate things, but ultimately the success of a class depends on the buy-in from students. Instructors ask students to do so many different things, so I think this model, where I can serve interests that the students have, is fabulous."

While Mac Millen agrees, he finds that the watchdog role can be exhausting.

"We're all students. You can only do so much on top of your schoolwork. It's kind of sad that students have to watch over every single project the college does, otherwise they won't follow their own plans. They'll get off track," he says.

Students can be the driving force behind the school's efforts to address environmental realities, but the road to sustainability is long. For these students, it will be a lifetime commitment.

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## GREEN BY DESIGN

by Ben Hansell & Laurel Moorhead

"Being green used to mean saving a hillside or restoring a creek," says John King, urban design writer for the San Francisco Chronicle. "Now it means living roofs and solar panels."

The most effective – and perhaps most expensive – way of making a difference is ensuring that buildings are environmentally sustainable.

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, buildings account for 72 percent of domestic electricity consumption and 38 percent of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Here are some examples of eco-friendly building at City College:

**Living roofs:** The rooftop plants on the Orfalea Family Center and the new Performing Arts Center will absorb rainwater, keeping polluted street runoff from flowing into sewer systems. Plant layers on the roof also help regulate the temperature inside.

**Solar panels:** Solar panels on the Performing Arts Center roof will generate an estimated 50 percent of the building's electricity.

**Responsible toilets:** The Performing Arts Center will have dual-flush toilets that use a 0.9-gallon flush for liquid waste and a 1.6-gallon flush for solid waste – half of what standard toilets use. The waterless urinals will have no moving parts. A 7,000-use cartridge in the drain will use biodegradable liquid sealant to block odor. For each cartridge, the urinals save about 10,000 gallons of water compared to low-flow toilets.

**Recycled mosaic:** The bright blue mosaic tiles that make up the facade of the Mission campus are made from 100-percent recycled glass.

**See the light:** The new Chinatown campus will have a system of angled slats that direct air and light into the building. The slats reflect light away from the classroom when it's too bright, but maximize sunlight by reflecting it onto a white ceiling when it's too dark. This efficient use of natural light will reduce electricity cost.

**Feel the heat:** Rooms at the Chinatown campus will have temperature sensors. Window blinds will rise and drop automatically to ensure comfortable temperatures. Since the rooms' exposure to heat from outside will be mechanized, occupants can use air conditioning and heaters less.

But the older buildings are a different story. "The buildings over 30 to 40 years old are problematic," says Vice Chancellor Jim Blomquist. The installation of high-efficiency lighting, plumbing and temperature-regulating systems is a priority.

"The greenest building is the one that you don't build – and the old building that you make more efficient," says biology instructor Peggy Lopipero-Langmo.

However, while construction of new buildings is in full swing, no plans are under way to improve the efficiency of the existing buildings.

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# THE GREEN BALANCE

**Drafting a sustainable approach** by Tamisan Latherow

Veronica Hunnicutt shuffles handfuls of notes and reports as she takes a seat in the stark, white conference room that doubles as an administrative kitchen. A lone office plant sits high on a filing cabinet in the corner of the room, straining toward the humming fluorescent lights.

As chairwoman of the Sustainability Sub-Committee, Hunnicutt manages the review of City College's Sustainability Plan, which details goals for greener curriculum and seeks to mitigate the environmental impact of existing facilities and future renovations. Founded in early 2007, the student-initiated, shared-governance group works as a liaison between the school, local businesses, neighborhoods and the City of San Francisco's Department of the Environment.

Since its inception, the sub-committee has reinvigorated student groups such as the Green Corps and the Urban Sustainability Alliance, which encourage members to be green ambassadors on behalf of their school and their communities.

"The sub-committee's goal is to assist the chancellor in raising consciousness on sustainability across the school's curriculum," Hunnicutt says. "We have many very active members all trying to make this a better school ... a better community. But we can always do more, and it'll take people who care about the environment and the future to get involved to help us."

With the Sustainability Plan, the college is striving to emulate other institutions with strong sustainability models, like the University of San Francisco and Ohlone College, as well as various green businesses around the Bay Area. Though the Sustainability Plan has not yet become school policy, there have been efforts to green campus buildings.

City College is currently pursuing LEED certification for several new buildings under construction. Achieving that cer-



PHOTOGRAPH Dania Maxwell

Students initiated the Native Plant Garden, which now surrounds Benny Bufano's "St. Francis of the Guns" statue on the Ocean campus. The statue may be moved and the garden uprooted this year.

tification, which recognizes buildings that meet benchmarks for environmental responsibility, can be expensive – up to 30 percent of the final construction costs. Many on the sub-committee are debating whether these costs should be incorporated into other green initiatives for the school instead. Like most new ventures, greening the school will require initial capital. One idea is an optional "green fee" added on to the standard student fee.

But success isn't just a matter of money. It will also require buy-in from the school community and more conscious decision making at all levels.

Peggy Lopipero-Langmo, a biology

instructor and highly active member of the sub-committee, says that while many in the administration are amenable to promoting green development on campus and increasing student access to green courses, City College is an "old fashioned institution" and things move "slow as molasses."

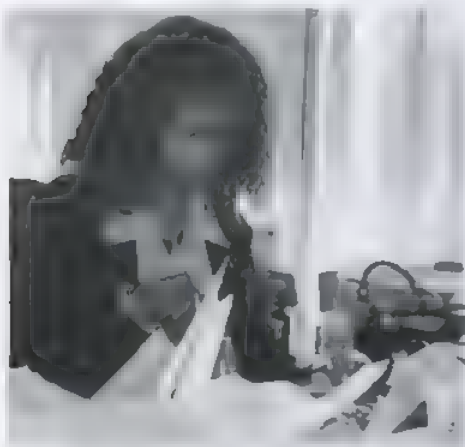
Committee members are worried that sluggish bureaucracy has already resulted in missed opportunities and counterproductive practices. For example, this year the administration made plans to install a fountain in the student-maintained Native Plant Garden on the Ocean campus. This would uproot the native plants there and require more energy to operate.



Lopipero-Langmo says there is a lack of communication.

"It seems like each hand is working hard on their own specific tasks, but they aren't talking to each other, so we don't know where we stand on most of the projects," she said.

"We did make some errors," said Chancellor Don Griffin, "but we're looking at getting some native and drought resistant plants in the future." He has enlisted Steven Brown of the Environmental Horticulture & Floristry Department to rectify the situation and to oversee all future plant development on the campus.



PHOTOGRAPH Michael P. Smith

Veronica Hunnicutt, head of the college's Sustainability Sub-Committee.

Regardless of new promises, Lopipero-Langmo says students and faculty will continue to advocate on behalf of the Native Plant Garden.

The sub-committee sees student empowerment as key to sustainability efforts on campus and in the wider community. In addition to encouraging student groups like Green Corps and the Urban Sustainability Alliance, the sub-committee is advocating for a curriculum that not only teaches students about sustainability but also provides them with the skills to enter the green workforce.

"We're looking at classes that provide a viable way to get employment for people at all levels," says Hunnicutt.

The new Green Career Internship Program is the first of its kind at the college. A collaborative effort between the South-east campus, the environmental justice

**'The real thing we have to do is try and engage the community so they see us as a place that they can look to, a place where they can get ideas about the green and sustainability initiatives.'**

**— Chancellor Don Griffin**

group Global Exchange, and the Solar Living Institute, the program is a professional resource for about a dozen students who study environmental advocacy with the Labor Studies Department.

Participants attend a green career conference with panels held by professionals and apply what they've learned during an internship set up by Global Exchange or the Solar Living Institute. So far, eight students have completed the paid internship program.

Idel Wilson, who did her internship at PLAN-IT Hardware, said that the program helped "plan her future." She feels the experience is helping her bring the green movement to her community.

"We're going to have thousands of students coming through and going out into the workforce. Our goal is to assist them," Griffin said.

This year, City College is offering approximately 40 courses that incorporate environmental issues into the curriculum. These include a course called "Green & Sustainable Small Business," as well as a five-class program designed to give students an understanding of green travel programs and initiatives.

But while the college has increased the number of courses in environmental science and environmental justice, many students are not aware of what's available. And students interested in these issues may not know where to look for more information. An online search for Bay Area college courses on environmental issues yields links to the University of San Francisco, San Francisco State University, Ohlone College and Merritt College. Lopipero-Langmo believes the campus needs to be more proactive in promoting these courses.

Members of the sub-committee would also like to see City College promote environmental awareness off campus. Residential neighborhoods surround almost every campus, and the college's

actions can affect a community much larger than the student body and faculty.

"The real thing we have to do is try and engage the community so they see us as a place that they can look to, a place where they can get ideas about the green and sustainability initiatives," Griffin said. "They look to us for leadership, so we need to get our act together quick."

The Ocean campus's on-site recycling center has the potential to be a valuable resource for the school and the community, a place where any resident can drop off their cans and bottles. However, the center has had some challenges. Griffin says in the past, a few "scavengers" would clean the school of their recyclable cans and bottles. But now their assistance is actually a hindrance to the program.

"By doing this they're cutting out our ability to build a recycling community here that will be able to take those products, sell them and get money to put back into the school," Griffin says. Plus, part of the program's goal is to show that recycling isn't something that should be done by two or three people, but by everyone.

Getting people to follow the Sustainability Plan will take time. But sub-committee members like Lopipero-Langmo have made it a personal goal to get people to "stop ignoring the white elephant in the room" and empower students and faculty to fix problems where they see them. Lopipero-Langmo says that most policy-makers know about as much about sustainability as the average person. The sub-committee hopes that students and faculty members can become better informed than policy-makers.

"As thinking and caring beings ... we need to be mindful of the consequences of our action and inaction," Hunnicutt said. "And provide a sustainable society for those who will occupy the planet now and in times to come."

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# SEE YA, SUCKERS!

## Jason Lewis dropped out to build a lollipop empire

by Jenny Herr Photography Alexandra Henley

The sun shines through the rosemary bushes in Jason Lewis' backyard and illuminates his bleached blonde hair. He takes a long inhale from an American Spirit and goes to check the temperature of the boiling mixture of sugar and corn syrup that is bubbling away in the kitchen. A distinct smell of black licorice and sugar wafts through the air. When the mixture in the large silver pot reaches 300 degrees, Lewis adds natural ginger extract and a teaspoon of wasabi – after washing his hands, of course. He takes a spoon and dips it in, grabbing a string of the sticky candy and tasting it.

"Mmm ... that's good," he says.

If you think lollipops are only for kids, you clearly haven't heard of the absinthe, maple-bacon or wasabi-ginger flavored ones made by Lollyphile. Lewis started the Internet-based candy company last year because, well, he had tons of leftover absinthe.

"I was making absinthe for fun and some friends of mine in Seattle were running a speakeasy, with gambling and booze and selling pot out of the coat check," says Lewis. "My friend came down and asked if I could make a lot of this."

Lewis made the absinthe and sent it up north to be sold. The speakeasy was shut down and Lewis was left with a ton of homemade liqueur. He was tired of having it around and decided to make it into candy for Halloween.

"My friends really loved it and I started selling it at underground parties and art shows. I had a little Web site and it was doing OK," Lewis says.

Aside from creating alcohol from wormwood and making it into candy, Lewis was taking business classes at City College. He dropped out of school on March 12, 2008, the same day a popular blog



Jason Lewis, 29, dropped his City College classes to focus on his Lollyphile business. He operates out of his kitchen in the Castro.



named "Daily Candy" wrote about the entrepreneur and the unusually flavored lollipops he was selling for \$2.50 each at Lollyphile.com.

"I came to class that day and we were supposed to be giving a presentation on what our business was going to be about and mine was like 'so basically I'm on valium right now because I'm freaking out and I just made a shit-load of money and I have to go. Bye,'" he says.

The next day, Lewis went back to explain to the teacher that for each hour he was at school, he was losing money. It wasn't that he didn't want to be there, but that the things he was learning in class had suddenly become his reality.

In the next three months, Lollyphile became more than a full-time job for Lewis.

"My friends all thought I was dead because I was working 14-hour days."

A timer buzzes and Lewis walks back over to the stove. He rolls up the sleeves of his dark blue hooded sweatshirt and grabs

the giant metal pot with two hands. He carries it to the counter and pours the steaming mixture into perfectly round 1½-inch lollipop molds that sit atop two cool slabs of marble.

Minutes after the molten liquid hardens, Lewis cracks each piece out of its mold. With one hand, he holds a stack of little plastic bags and quickly shoves the individual pops into them.

He has made over 30,000 lollipops. However, because of the sudden boom in sales, Lewis needed to hire part-time help, most of whom were his friends. Others, like Kristen Glennon, he met behind the coffee counter at Philz Coffee in the Mission District.

"Jason came to me with this opportunity and I needed the extra money," says Glennon, excited to be involved at the beginning of something like this.

Today, Lewis runs the business out of his studio in the Castro. He hopes to one day have a single location where people can work, cook and do all things Lol-

lyphile. Until then, most of the lollipop making is done by the part-timers in their homes.

For Lewis, the most important part of all is the excitement that comes with starting something he's passionate about.

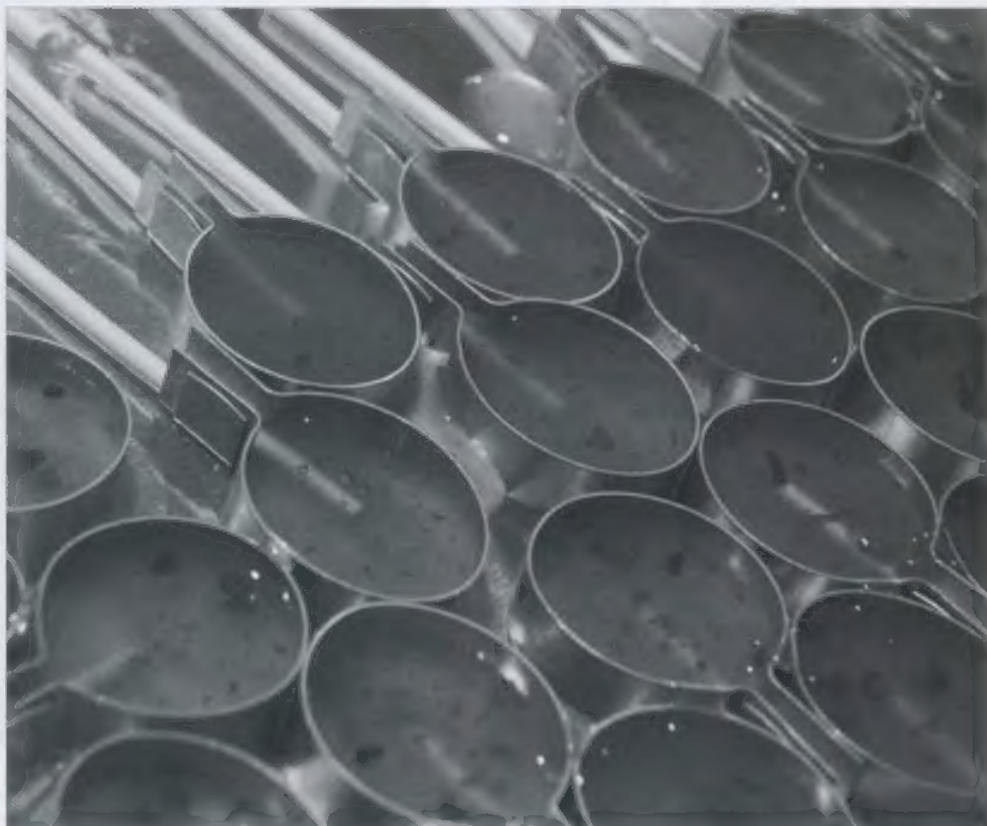
"There's a certain amount of 'if I fuck up then it's me on the cutting block,'" he says. "But more than that, it's that if I succeed in this, then it's mine."

It hasn't all been easy. The accounting and paperwork has been the most challenging part for Lewis. Making an awesome product came naturally.


The lollipops are now ready to be shipped. The new wasabi-ginger flavor has an amber glow. Lewis puts the lollipop in his mouth and looks to the ceiling as he samples its flavor. The ginger is strong and spicy and the wasabi adds an unexpected kick. It's hard to tell what's making him smile, the candy or the sweet smell of success.

**Jenny Herr**  
jennyherr@gmail.com

After the lollipop syrup reaches 275 degrees Fahrenheit, Lewis pours it into 1½-inch stainless steel molds (left) which rest on a foil-covered marble slab to help them cool more quickly. When the mixture hardens, he pops the lollipops out of their frames and seals them in little baggies for distribution. Lewis makes more than 4,000 lollipops a week.





A man with a beard and long hair, wearing a dark t-shirt and light-colored pants, stands on a city street at night. He is looking towards the camera. The street is illuminated by a warm, orange street light. In the background, there are multi-story buildings and parked cars. The overall mood is gritty and urban.

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PHOTOGRAPH Michael P. Smith



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